Fran^s Richards

HERMIONE,

OR THE

ORPHAN SISTERS.

A NOVEL.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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HERMIONE.

LETTER VI.

TO MISS BEAUMONT.

DEC. 12.

WE removed to Mrs. Hindon's yeſterday, who received us with a profuſion of civilities. They had company all the day; but my ſpirits were weak, and I ſupported no part in the converſation. Mrs. Hindon, however, would not allow me to indulge my contemplative humour in peace, but enquired repeatedly what made me look ſo grave, and if I found myſelf indiſpoſed, till I was obliged to plead a head ach in excuſe for being ſo dull a companion. This happened really to be the caſe; and no ſooner was ſhe informed of it, than in ſpite of all

my reſiſtance ſhe fairly forced me to go to reſt at a very early hour, long before any of her gueſts thought of taking leave. To this piece of kindneſs, though rather officious (for poor Mrs. Hindon's civilities are unfortunately ſometimes rather obtruſive) I was not ſorry to conſent; and retiring to bed, though not to ſleep, I paſſed the hours more at eaſe than I could have done in the midſt of a large circle where I was conſtrained to aſſume an appearance of gaiety foreign to my feelings. Lady Farnford was of the party laſt night; and to-morrow evening we propoſe accompanying her Ladyſhip to Drury-lane Theatre. She has a weekly box, to which we have received a general invitation whenever we incline to go.

Fanny, who as yet has not been preſent at an entertainment of this kind, is half wild with eagerneſs and expectation; and for myſelf, never having ſeen a dramatic

matic performance ſince that gay and happy period when I accompanied my deareſt Sophia and her worthy aunt to ſeveral of the different diverſions at M—, the idea of my beloved friend is ſo intimately connected with the thoughts of an amuſement of this kind that I ſigh at the melancholy reflection how diſtant we are at preſent, and recollect with redoubled anguiſh how delightful were the ſenſations of that pleaſing æra of my life to thoſe which have ſucceeded.

DEC. 14.

Well, my dear Sophia, we were both much delighted at the play; although there was ſomewhat very gloomy in a reflection which could not but occur on firſt entering, that in ſo large an audience, where half the world ſeemed met together, not one friendly countenance

was to be found on which we had ever looked before, Lady Farnford and her daughter excepted (for Mr. Howard as well as Mrs. Hindon, were engaged to a lady's aſſembly, and Mr. Hindon ſeldom goes to places of public amuſement.) There is ſomething extremely diſmal in the thoughts of being an unconnected and ſolitary being, about whom no one is either ſolicitous or intereſted; nor does the idea ever ſtrike more poignantly than when you behold all around you in the full enjoyment of the bleſſings of friendſhip and ſociety. Miſs Farnford, in particular, appeared to poſſeſs, if not friends, ſuch variety of intimate acquaintances, that I could not avoid envying her in my heart the many kind ſalutations ſhe gave and returned from different parts of the houſe. This was however but a paſſing idea; for moſt fortunately in the midſt of the muſing to which it gave birth, and which in ſpite

of

of the novelty of the ſurrounding ſcene almoſt wholly engroſſed me, I was ſuddenly rouſed from my melancholy contemplations by the ſight of Mr. Roatſley, who had entered the next box, but inſtantly on perceiving us removed to ours, and paid us his compliments with his uſual grace and politeneſs.

The train of recollections that had preceded his entrance made me view him with redoubled pleaſure. Luckily there was a place vacant between Fanny and me, of which he took immediate poſſeſſion; nor did he think of quitting it till the inimitable comedy of the Journey to London was concluded, for from ſome particular circumſtances the play had been changed. I was almoſt equally delighted with the repreſentation itſelf, and with the admirable and amuſing obſervations it drew from Mr. Roatſley, who was if poſſible ſtill more agreeable than when we paſſed the day with him at

Dover. There is indeed a certain mixture of ſweetneſs and vivacity blended both in his countenance and manners, that renders his converſation uncommonly pleaſing. I was much charmed to perceive that the denouement of the piece, which, though defective I think in point of delicacy, is exceedingly affecting, brought a tear of feeling into his eye: there is indeed ſomething ſo amiable in any unaffected ſymptoms of ſoftneſs and ſenſibility in a manly countenance, and it forms a contraſt ſo attractive from that roughneſs and auſterity which is in general ſeated upon their faces, that in my opinion it is the moſt inſinuating of all prepoſſeſſions; and as it gives you in a manner an inſight into the mind, renders the figure itſelf infinitely more intereſting. I ſuppoſe it was owing to this obſervation that Mr. Roatſley never ſtruck me with being ſo incomparably handſome as he did this evening.

Had

Had I even enjoyed leſs pleaſure at the repreſentation of a piece which I have ſo often read with repeated ſatisfaction, I ſhould have been ſufficiently amuſed and delighted from obſerving the effect it produced on my dear Fanny, who was charmed beyond meaſure by an exhibition ſo entirely new, and of which my deſcription could have given her but a faint notion. Roatſley ſeemed both pleaſed and entertained with the innocent *naivetè* of her expreſſions of wonder at all ſhe ſaw, and with great goodneſs of heart enjoyed the entertainment ſhe drew from every object.

When the play was finiſhed, he left us for a few moments to pay his reſpects to a lady in another box; and ſo comfortable was the idea of poſſeſſing at leaſt one acquaintance amidſt ſo many faces totally new, for we were placed at a diſtance from either Lady Farnford or her daughter, that I could not avoid being

apprehenſive leaſt he ſhould not again return; but in a ſhort time he made his appearance, and reſumed his place, where he continued till we left the houſe.

DEC. 27.

This day produced an event which has charmed both Fanny and me beyond meaſure. We have unexpectedly met with an old friend, (for ſuch in this part of the world we ſhould deem almoſt any perſon whom we had known in our own country); and as ſuch we cordially welcomed our lively acquaintance, Mrs. Weldon, who arrived in town only the evening before laſt.

Fortunately ſhe had taken lodgings in the next ſtreet; and perceiving us in Mrs. Hindon's carriage paſs her window in our way to church, ſhe made her footman watch our return, with a meſſage informing

informing us of her abode, and requeſting that we would take immediate advantage of the information. Delighted with this intelligence, ſo unexpected too, as Mrs. Weldon, when at the chateau, had not once dropped any hint of an intention to re-viſit England, we requeſted Mrs. Hindon to ſet us down at her houſe. She gave us the kindeſt reception poſſible: and on our part, we felt as if we had met one in whom we were warmly intereſted, and who was nearly connected with us. She informed us that buſineſs relative to a legacy lately bequeathed her had obliged her to come over at a ſudden call, and that ſhe had left our much reſpected friends in good health.

How ſtrangely do circumſtances, apparently the moſt trifling, alter our opinions and prepoſſeſſions: this Mrs. Weldon, whom I thought at beſt but an agreeable coquet, and whoſe friendſhip

I had in Languedoc no ſort of deſire to cultivate, now ſcarcely appears to me the perſon ſhe was, except in her powers of pleaſing, which are if poſſible augmented. The change is not however entirely owing to the partiality with which I could not but regard an acquaintance formed under the roof of our worthy friend; the alteration is in herſelf; and I now perceive how illiberal and injudicious are often the ſentiments and impreſſions inſpired by an imperfect knowledge. Mrs. Weldon, in her own houſe, and in private, poſſeſſes not merely the gaiety which amuſes, but that good ſenſe and knowledge of the world which muſt charm and improve all who are admitted to an intimacy with her. Theſe good qualities are blended with a flow of ſpirits uncommonly elevated, which diffuſes a vivacity over her manner and appearance that on a ſuperficial acquaintance may be miſtaken for levity, but which, on a nearer

nearer view, I find proves merely the natural reſult of a ſprightly turn of mind, added to an early introduction into life; circumſtances that in general give defiance to baſhfulneſs, at leaſt to that painful degree of it that accompanies awkwardneſs.

She was ſo kind as to inſiſt on our remaining with her the whole day, and at her earneſt requeſt an apology was diſpatched to Mrs. Hindon; indeed I have not ſpent one ſo entirely to my ſatisfaction ſince my arrival. Mrs. Weldon was equally amuſing, whether we converſed on gay or ſerious ſubjects; and uninterrupted by company, we chatted over affairs that mutually intereſted us.

I was extremely ſorry however to find that ſhe did not regard Madame de Clarence with that cordial eſteem which I imagined every one muſt be diſpoſed to feel for a character ſo amiable; and ſhe let us into ſome little circumſtances relating

lating to family diſſentions, which I never ſhould have ſuſpected to have occurred between a couple who always behave, at leaſt in company, with the utmoſt apparent good humour and politeneſs to each other. Mrs. Weldon even told us, that poor Madame de Clarence has an unfortunate failing in her temper, which renders herſelf and her huſband equally miſerable: ſhe poſſeſſes, it ſeems, an unhappy degree of jealouſy, that leads her to conclude almoſt every young woman, whoſe viſits are frequent in the family, the object of Monſieur de Clarence's affections; and no ſooner is ſhe convinced of her error in one place, than her ſuſpicions are turned to another quarter, however improbable and extraordinary.

This is a moſt unfortunate diſpoſition, and ſincerely to be lamented; for I fear, according to Mrs. Weldon's account, it is quite incurable. She gave me innumerable inſtances of her weakneſs in this particular;

particular; and added, that as ſhe had been for ſome time an inmate of her family, ſhe had not failed herſelf to experience the effects of her temper in this point.

I expreſſed my ſurprize that this unlucky foible ſhould never have been hinted to me till now, nor the ſlighteſt ſuſpicion of a turn of mind ſo adverſe to her tranquillity ever occur to my mind during the whole period of my acquaintance with Madame de Clarence.

You was the laſt perſon, ſaid ſhe, to whom ſuch an information was likely to be ſuggeſted. The ſtrict intimacy that ſubſiſted between you was ſufficiently known to deter all malicious or officious diſpoſed perſons from entertaining you with a topic ſo little agreeable as the errors of your friend; and the circle you ranged in was ever ſo limited, that large as is the proportion of the world which comes under theſe deſcriptions, I believe there

there were very few of either claſs that could be ranked among the number of your acquaintance.

But pray, added ſhe, had you never occaſion to remark, during your laſt viſit, that Madame behaved to me with a diſtance wholly unaccountable, and which muſt, I think, have provoked both your obſervation and ſurprize? The real truth of the matter was, that as my acquaintance with the family originated through Monſieur, who lived in terms of the ſtricteſt friendſhip with poor Mr. Weldon, and to whom I was in ſome meaſure given in charge by my huſband in his laſt moments, the lady never regarded me with much kindneſs; but conſcious ſhe herſelf poſſeſſes not addreſs ſufficient to preſerve her huſband's affections, ſhe ſuſpects every pretty woman ſhe ſees to be more in favour than herſelf, and charitably accuſes her of the theft.

That Madame de Clarence diſapproved of

of Mrs. Weldon's behaviour I well knew, nor was I ignorant that ſhe was no great favourite with that lady; but as I could not myſelf avoid joining in the cenſure which her coquetry incurred, it made no impreſſion on my mind at the time, nor could excite either ſurprize or ſuſpicion: our lively little friend, mean while, happy in the poſſeſſion of unbounded ſpirits, dreamt not of this ſevere judgment on her gaiety till after Fanny and I left the chateau, when the augmented reſerve and ſolemn deportment of Madame de Clarence ſoon gave place to an open manifeſtation of her repugnance and diſlike.

Her ſententious harangues, ſaid Mrs. Weldon, (who always expreſſes herſelf with force, and on this occaſion may be forgiven the exaggeration of reſentment) and thread bare lectures on the dignity of a proper retinue in the ſex, were ſuddenly converted into plain invectives againſt

againſt the licentiouſneſs of the preſent age, and the unprincipled levity of all its daughters, whether maids, wives, or widows; thoſe of the latter denomination had, you may believe, ſufficient juſtice done them; till at laſt it was impoſſible for me any longer to miſtake my own reſemblance in the pictures ſhe continually drew of thoſe profligate females, who having buried the man, either agreeable or otherwiſe, who had once received their vows, dared to be happy, and preſumed to confeſs it too after they had regained their freedom.

For my own part, continued ſhe, united by my friends early in life to a man twice my age, I am ſatisfied with having performed my duty to him when alive, without conſidering myſelf as obliged to mourn his loſs when gone; and bleſſed with conſcious innocence, I allow myſelf thoſe liberties in which a mind free and at eaſe is glad to rejoice

after

after a tedious bondage. However, finding Madame de Clarence was always grave when I laughed, and ſorrowful when I was gay, I began to ſuſpect that I had worn out her patience by too long a viſit, and under this notion was preparing to take a civil departure, when one day, in the little arbour, (you may remember it I believe, it is at the entrance into the wood) in the little arbour, where I had taken refuge in a fine evening, to avoid exciting a rudeneſs of behaviour for which I could aſſign no adequate motive, I was unexpectedly joined by Monſieur; who ſeeing me ſeated, naturally enough, you know, placed himſelf by me and entered into converſation.

On mentioning my intentions of leaving the chateau next morning, he confeſſed, with an ingenuity which our friendſhip of long ſtanding fully authorized, that he could not but approve of the prudence which dictated this ſtep,

and

and acknowledged to me that a jealouſy of temper, which formed, he ſaid, the miſery of both their lives, had ſo encreaſed inſtead of abating with his wife's years, that it was grown quite inſupportable: it is then no wonder, added he, in a friendly manner, that you ſhould at laſt become the object of her ſuſpicions, ſince fifty women, fifty times your inferior, have by turns excited them.

This I allow, continued Mrs. Weldon, muſt have ſounded ſomewhat complimentary to an ear, the organs of which were diſordered by jealouſy; and juſt at that inſtant who ſhould we ſee gliding by the trees but Madame herſelf, who had been without doubt liſtening to a ſketch of her own character, not much either ſoftened or embelliſhed from the lips of her huſband, and done perhaps rather a little in *caracatura*. But one muſt pardon him ſome degree of exaggeration

geration from a juſt exaſperation at her unceaſing and teazing importunities.

After this little adventure, you may ſuppoſe it was time for me to be gone. Madame pretended indiſpoſition, and kept her room the reſt of the evening; breakfaſted next morning *chez elle*; and I left the chateau, having received only a meſſage that ſhe was ſorry ſhe could not ſee me before I went.

Poor Madame de Clarence! I pity her from my ſoul: it was indeed impoſſible to hear that my worthy friend was unhappy, even though owing to her own unfortunate weakneſs, without ſincerely deploring that fault which is attended, I am convinced, by no other in her boſom: but what a number of great and amiable qualities will not this ſingle error obſcure in a huſband's eyes.

Till now, I always concluded Monſieur in fault; and that to the cold civility of his manner, thoſe clouds were

owing

owing which during our laſt viſit I ſometimes obſerved hanging on his lady's brow. He was always indeed ſcrupulouſly polite in his attentions to her; but his behaviour ſeemed the ſtudied effuſions of good breeding and propriety, to which, from her rank in life, and the ſplendid fortune ſhe brought him, ſhe juſtly lays claim. I heartily lament however, that ſhe ſhould have carried her ſuſpicions to lengths ſo blameable: lengths which muſt operate towards augmenting the alienation ſhe deplores.

This unexpected and delightful rencontre, together with the agreeable alteration in Mrs. Weldon's manners, entirely diſcarded the reſerve with which I uſed formerly to converſe with her; and upon her talking openly of her affairs, which are at preſent ſomewhat embarraſſed, I made no ſcruple of acquainting her with the circumſtances of our ſituation, ſo replete

plete with difficulties, ſo ſingularly perplexing and uncomfortable.

She entered kindly and with intereſt into all our anxieties, and told us that ſome years ago Lady Linroſe and her family were not unknown to her. That was before ſhe ſeparated from her huſband, ſaid ſhe; but ſhe never was a woman by any means to my taſte; for though her Ladyſhip can make herſelf extremely agreeable where ſhe pleaſes, ſhe is intolerably proud, exceedingly fond of money, and as artful as the devil. I dare to ſay ſhe was more to blame than her Lord, though ſhe has been cunning enough to perſuade the world, and even Lord Belmont, that his peeviſh humour rendered her life a burthen to her. No doubt he was a very capricious, ill tempered man; but I believe he had provocation ſufficient. I aſk pardon, however, my dears, for talking of your aunt

aunt with ſo little ceremony; though to own the truth, when you come to know her as well as I do, your opinion will probably coincide with mine.

I aſſured Mrs. Weldon ſhe might uſe all manner of freedom, and eagerly enquired if all the family exhibited portraits equally unfavourable.

The eldeſt daughter, ſaid ſhe, is as proud to the full as her mother, and ſtill more deficient in good humour; but the ſecond, who was ſcarce twelve years old when I left England, was the ſweeteſt, moſt enchanting little girl in the world; and I really think reſembled you, Miſs Seymour, extremely. There was always ſome perſon in my head, when I ſaw you in Languedoc, that you ſtruck me with having a likeneſs to, and now I recollect it is your couſin, Miſs Lucy Dudley. There is another daughter, but ſhe was then quite a child; and there are two ſons; the eldeſt is a very good young man

man I am told, but his talents I believe are not ſhining; the youngeſt, however, when I laſt ſaw him, was a blooming youth of eighteen, captivating as an Adonis, and in all reſpects amiable and engaging. I hear he has by no means diſappointed the hopes inſpired by his juvenile perfections, either in point of mind or perſon, for he is by all accounts a very extraordinary young man, and I have been informed poſſeſſes a degree of influence over Lord Belmont, with whom he is at preſent abroad, which I think you muſt regard as a favourable circumſtance in your ſituation; for a ſingle glance from either of you muſt intereſt him in your cauſe.

Mrs. Hindon's carriage being at this time announced, we took our leave, and on our return found a card of invitation from Lady Farnford to accompany her to the play to-morrow evening.

We

DEC. 23.

We were delighted beyond expreſſion laſt night. The inimitable Mrs. Siddons ſurpaſſes all that can either be conceived or deſcribed. Added to the moſt exquiſite taſte and feeling, ſhe poſſeſſes a countenance the moſt expreſſive, over which ſhe enjoys a command the moſt inconceivable.

However pleaſing to a perſon unaccuſtomed to the glare of a public exhibition, the effect of the company, the various decorations, and the diſpoſition of the different lights, muſt at firſt prove, yet the inſtant the curtain drew up my eyes were immoveably fixed on the ſtage, nor would it, I imagined, have been in the power of any other object for a moment to have engaged my attention.

I ſoon found however that Mrs. Siddons,

dons, all powerful as ſhe is, could not wholly engroſs it; for on caſting my eyes round the houſe, I diſcovered Mr. Roatſley in the adjoining box. As he ſat alone, I could not avoid flattering myſelf that he would join us as he had done the week before, and Fanny and I could have eaſily contrived room for him, although the houſe was extremely crouded; but to my no ſmall regret he did not appear to have the moſt diſtant thought of approaching. On perceiving us he indeed inſtantly bowed; but with a degree of coldneſs and reſerve which almoſt diſconcerted me; and though from the accidental change of places there was a ſpare ſeat by us moſt part of the evening, far from wiſhing to take poſſeſſion of it, he never once came near the box.

Aſtoniſhed at a change really ſtriking, as well as unaccountable after the flow of civility with which he had before attended us at the ſame place, I tried in vain to

diſcover what could poſſibly have occaſioned the alteration; but I could only reſt my concluſions on that fickleneſs and caprice of which all his ſex have been ſo vehemently accuſed by ours, and of which, though I have ſeen nothing, I have read and heard much.

Poſſeſſed with this idea, I endeavoured to ſatisfy myſelf; but another ſoon accompanied it, which partook perhaps not a little of the weakneſs attributed to our ſex: I ſuſpected that we did not improve upon intimacy; and that diſappointed in the expectations which at firſt induced him to cultivate the acquaintance, he wiſhed to let it drop. Soon after the firſt act was concluded, I took notice that we were evidently the ſubject of his converſation with another gentleman who had joined him; an idea which you may believe did not leſſen my perplexity.

Roatſley ſeemed to regard me with looks of anxious gravity; while the countenance

tenance of his companion, whom to my no ſmall ſurprize I recollected to be our late fellow lodger, Captain Bradſhaw, manifeſted nothing but ſatisfaction.

Juſt as the fourth act was concluded, Lady Farnford beckoned to a lady behind, deſiring her to inform her ſon, who could not get admittance for the croud, that a ſeat was kept for him on the bench on which I was ſitting.

Way was therefore made for the gentleman: but gueſs my aſtoniſhment and regret, when I found that this ſon of Lady Farnford's was the profligate and audacious young man who had terrified me at Mrs. Brumpton's. I was ſhocked on ſeeing him; nor was my perturbation abated, you may believe, from finding that his mother meant to place him by me.

Without having time to conſider, I determined that no degree of ill-judged baſhfulneſs ſhould prevent me from ma-

nifeſting a reſentment ſo juſtly incurred; I therefore haſtily entreated a lady who ſat on the bench behind, to allow me to change places with her, as I wiſhed to ſpeak with my ſiſter; and having by this little artifice contrived to place myſelf at ſome diſtance from him, I pretended to be earneſtly engaged in converſation with Fanny. Lady Farnford however ſoon tapped me with her fan, and aſked leave to introduce her ſon. I was then abſolutely obliged to turn round, and perceived in his countenance an aſtoniſhment and confuſion which ought indeed to have wholly overpowered him; but he ſeemed to recover himſelf very ſpeedily, at leaſt he obtained ſufficient command over his feelings to pay me the uſual compliments, though I believe, for I hardly deigned to look at him, not without embarraſment. As for me, I ſcarcely bowed my head, and inſtantly turned

turned from him with unfeigned indignation.

I believe his mother was not a little confounded at the rudeneſs of my behaviour; but without giving myſelf the trouble of conſidering what interpretation ſhe might put on it, I continued to talk with Fanny, who was almoſt equally vexed at this rencontre.

I ſaw Roatſley's eyes were fixed on our party, and perceived him whiſper his friend. Overcome with a variety of emotions, added to the intenſe heat, I felt myſelf now ſuddenly extremely ſick, and apprehenſive of fainting, immediate aroſe. You may conjecture the buſtle which enſued: I was carried out almoſt inſenſible, ſupported in the arms of the odious Farnford, who ventured to aſſiſt me while I was unable to repulſe him, and attended by his mother and Fanny.

They ſtopped in the paſſage to give me air and adminiſter eau de luce,

ſalts, &c. before they ventured to call a chair, and juſt at that inſtant Roatſley and his friend came up. The former, hoping I was recovering from the bad effects of the heat, walked on with a formal bow; and the other giving Farnford a ſignificant ſmile, ſaid to him in a loud whiſper as he paſſed—I give you joy Farnford; there is no need of my introduction now I perceive.

Shocked to the ſoul, I exerted all my returning ſtrength, and diſengaging myſelf entirely from Farnford, who had preſumed to ſupport me with his arm, I told Lady Farnford I was much better, and wiſhed inſtantly to go home in a chair, as Mrs. Hindon's carriage could not have arrived ſo early.

If you think there is no danger of a relapſe, anſwered ſhe, in my opinion Miſs Seymour you had better return to your place till my ſon enquires if my coach, which ſhall obey your commands, is in waiting.

I inſiſted

I inſiſted however upon going directly; and her ſon, who ſeemed to aim at covering the awkwardneſs he could not avoid feeling under an appearance of rude indifference, ſaid, with an air of unconcern, O you can eaſily have a couple of chairs if you will go, and walked away to order them.

I ſuppoſe he was glad of an opportunity of leaving us; for to my great joy inſtead of returning himſelf he ſent a boxkeeper to inform us that chairs were procured.

Where is my ſon? cried Lady Farnford. But happily no ſon appeared; and deſiring that her footman might be ordered to ſee us ſafe home, ſhe wiſhed us good night.

When we came to the door, we found Farnford ſtanding with Mr. Roatſley and Captain Bradſhaw. Will you give me leave to ſee you through the crowd? ſaid Farnford to me with the moſt perfect

caſe. I replied only by withdrawing the hand he had ſeized, and by an air (I cannot call it a look for I had ſcarce courage to look at him) of averſion and contempt. He was diſconcerted I believe; but covering it with a ſmile of effrontery, ſtepped back, and inſtantly Mr. Roatſley advancing, offered his ſervices with a politeneſs and reſpect which gave me the only ſenſation of ſatisfaction I had felt that evening. I curtſeyed in ſilence; and accepting his hand, he conducted me to my chair, after which he left me to perform the ſame office to Fanny.

Fortunately Mr. and Mrs. Hindon were both engaged abroad, ſo that I inſtantly went to bed; where inſtead of ſleeping I ruminated moſt part of the night on the diſagreeable occurrences of the preceding day.

My reflections were not indeed of the moſt comfortable nature. My dear father's loſs, attended, alas! by a multitude

tude of circumſtances additionally painful and perplexing, have kept my mind for ſome months paſt in a ſtate of unceaſing agitation; and the ſuſpence in which we continue at preſent, from the unaccountable ſilence of Lady Linroſe to Mr. Howard's letter, conſpires to give me unſpeakable uneaſineſs. My paſt ſufferings, as well as preſent anxieties, by weakening my mind and exhauſting my ſpirits, render me doubly ſuſceptible of every ſlight vexation; the probability therefore, nay almoſt certainty, in ſpite of my moſt vigilant precautions, of meeting frequently with Captain Farnford while I reſide in a family who are upon a footing of intimacy with his, diſtreſſes me prodigiouſly, and I muſt alſo confeſs, although I am ſenſible how abſurd beyond meaſure it is to allow myſelf to be hurt from the caprice of others, that I cannot help regretting the change in Mr. Roatſley's behaviour, becauſe he appears

ſo extremely oppoſite from a man who would permit himſelf to be governed by mere whim. My thoughts are conſtantly employed in conjecturing what could poſſibly have occaſioned an alteration ſo apparent. It is however of little importance in itſelf; but it is ſo different from his former behaviour that ſome prejudice muſt have excited him to this conduct; and there is not I believe a more painful ſenſation than that occaſioned by having unjuſtly loſt the good opinion of thoſe we eſteem.

Is it not aſtoniſhing that we hear nothing of Lady Linroſe? We begin to fear the letter cannot have found its way to her Ladyſhip. Adieu!

LET-

LETTER VII.

TO MISS BEAUMONT.

DEC. 26.

YESTERDAY morning, Mrs. Hindon, whom as yet I had not let into any particulars relating to the odious Farnford, informed me that Sir Jonathan's family were that day to take a Chriſtmas dinner with us. You have hardly ſeen the beſt part of it, ſaid ſhe. Their ſon, the Captain, is a mighty pretty young man, and extremely clever and agreeable. He wiſhes of all things in the world to be introduced to you; and her Ladyſhip told me he has abſolutely raved about Miſs Seymour ſince he ſaw her two nights ago

ago at the play. He ſwears there was nobody there to be compared with her either for grace or beauty. He has been out of town lately, or you ſhould have ſeen him before now. I aſſure you, ladies, continued ſhe, before I had time to reply, he is no contemptible conqueſt. Beſides his father's fortune, which to be ſure is not ſo good as it has been, he has expectations from a rich relation, and is an only ſon, with the incumbrance of but one ſiſter's fortune, and ſhe you ſee is a puny, poor thing. Lady Farnford brought a good fifteen hundred per annum with her. Sir Jonathan's eſtate was originally as much more; and although no doubt ſome of it is gone, there are ſtill excellent pickings left. They have been ſome years on a frugal plan too; ſo that I dare ſay things are almoſt clear by this time. Indeed, Miſs Seymour, I wiſh with all my heart this may turn out a match. You know the young man

man is my couſin; and I ſhould be happy to have the honour of being related to you. Come, Miſs Fanny, don't you think it would do charmingly.

I am not acquainted with him, ſaid Fanny drily.

Well, I hope you'll both become better acquainted with him in time. But Lord look how Miſs Seymour bluſhes: well things will come about, I'll lay a good wager, cried ſhe, laughing immoderately at the confuſion which the ſound of the wretches name unavoidably occaſioned me. Come, continued ſhe, with her uſual volubility, you ſaw him at the play I know; well tell truth honeſtly, is he not extremely handſome?

Indeed, Madam, anſwered I, I am ſorrow to differ from you; but I don't think he has the ſlighteſt pretenſions to it.

Nay this is downright coquetry. I'm certain you cannot think as you ſpeak.

You

You are afraid I'll tell; but I promiſe you I ſhall keep the ſecret.

I hope then you will allow me to entruſt you with it, cried I much provoked and in the midſt of a long harangue, for when eager on a ſubject Mrs. Hindon never allows any one but herſelf to talk. I interrupted her by explaining the too juſt occaſion her couſin had given me for the moſt determined repugnance and diſlike. I ſoon however regretted the confidence I had placed in her, when I found that inſtead of being ſhocked at the recital, ſhe appeared ſo highly entertained that I thought ſhe would have fallen from her chair, ſhe laughed ſo violently.

Oh! cried ſhe at length, I never heard ſuch a good ſtory in my life. And ſo he really miſtook you for a woman of the town? How confounded then he muſt have been to find you in his mother's party, and placed on the ſame bench

bench with her at Drury-lane. I ſhould have been quite delighted to have ſeen his aſtoniſhment and confuſion: he muſt have looked ſo droll.

There could not have been much *confuſion* in the caſe, ſaid I, ſince he wiſhes to throw himſelf again in my way.

No doubt he is ſenſible of his error, and deſires to be received into favour.

I then very ſeriouſly told her that I was determined not to ſee Captain Farnford if I poſſibly could avoid it, and would be infinitely obliged to her if ſhe would be ſo kind as to inform me when ſhe knew of his viſits, entreating that ſhe would permit me to keep my apartment on ſuch occaſions. To this, after ſome remonſtrances, ſhe unwilling conſented; though I could eaſily perceive ſhe thought my behaviour an unneceſſary refinement of delicacy, which I had impoſed on myſelf out of an abſurd idea of propriety.

After

After the company were gone, Mrs. Hindon returned to relieve me, ſhe ſaid, from my impriſonment, and entertained me the whole remaining part of the evening with the Captain's accompliſhments: he was the moſt agreeable young man—ſo like a man of faſhion—ſo much at his eaſe—ſo lively—indeed, Miſs Seymour, you muſt have been quite molified had you ſeen how diſmal and mortified he looked during dinner.

What, Madam, cried I, after being ſo lively.

Oh I mean when your indiſpoſition was mentioned: and indeed I could ſcarcely talk of it without laughing; to think you was above ſtairs in perfect health all the while he was regretting your illneſs as ſo great a misfortune. However I whiſpered the truth to her Ladyſhip.

I am indeed extremely ſorry you did, Madam, cried I. I thought you had promiſed me not to mention to any perſon

ſon an adventure in which I bluſh ever to have been involved.

Oh! there was no harm, you know, in telling it to Lady Farnford. I aſſure you ſhe blamed her ſon very much, and ſaid ſhe did not wonder at your reſentment; only ſhe hoped it would not be carried too far; for that he was moſt paſſionately in love with you, and tho' he had been too much penetrated with his behaviour to confeſs it to her when his firſt meeting with you took place, ſhe was certain he was thoroughly vexed at the accident, which muſt have entirely reſulted from intoxication and his miſtaking you for one of thoſe ladies who appear in ſuch crowds in the duſk of the evening; for nothing on earth Captain Farnford wiſhed ſo anxiouſly as to render himſelf agreeable to you: and indeed, Miſs Seymour, I muſt own, that to make too much fuſs about this affair is beſtowing an importance on it greater than it deſerves.

deſerves. It would be better, I ſhould imagine, after having teſtified your diſpleaſure as you have now ſufficiently done, to appear as if you had forgot it.

Forgot it, Madam! cried I. I muſt poſſeſs a very ſlight memory indeed if I am capable of forgetting behaviour like his. I do not intend to make any fuſs about it; all I wiſh is to avoid him; and if chance ſhould introduce him where I am, all the reſentment I ſhould diſcover would be to regard him as an utter ſtranger. I have ſeen enough of his character to cure me of all deſire for his acquaintance; and as to the paſſion you tell me he has conceived for me, and which muſt be altogether imaginary, give me leave to ſay that had I never beheld him in a point of view ſo diſagreeable, it would have been equally unſucceſsful.

I pronounced this in a tone ſo grave and

and determined, that Mrs. Hindon looked ſurprized.

Well, well, Miſs Seymour, I had no commiſſion to carry the Captain's propoſals, ſo have no intention to be the bearer of his refuſal; and ſoon after Mr. Hindon coming in, the converſation ſhifted to other topics.

This morning a card arrived from Sir Jonathan and Lady Farnford, enquiring after my health, and adding, that they hoped it would not prevent me from accompanying my ſiſter and this family to dinner with them on Thurſday. Mrs: Hindon diſtreſſed me exceedingly by obſtinately perſiſting in a reſolution to remain at home if we would not conſent to go; and though I was both teized and vexed at her ill-judged civility, I was conſtrained to make her ſuffer for her complaiſance. A polite apology was therefore diſpatched.

DEC. 27.

This moment, Sophia, a card is brought from Lady Linroſe. She is in town, and writes as follows:

Lady Linroſe preſents her compliments to Mr. Howard, and requeſts he would take the trouble to call in St. James's Square this evening about ſix o'clock, as Lady Linroſe wiſhes to converſe with him on the ſubject of the letter ſhe received ſome time ſince.

Oh! Sophia! how infinitely intereſting are theſe few lines. The agitation they have given us is unſpeakable. I believe Fanny has read them over fifty times, and examined with eagerneſs and curioſity the formation of every letter. She draws a favourable interpretation from Lady Linroſe being arrived in town,

and

and is ſo extremely ſanguine, that ſhe has infected me with expectations which I can hardly conceive myſelf ſo happy as to find realized.

Adieu till the evening, when you ſhall know the reſult of all this perturbation.

DEC. 28.

Well, my dear—But I will not anticipate. Mr. Howard, whoſe friendly anxiety equalled if not ſurpaſſed our own, went to St. James's Square, a few minutes before ſix, and was uſhered into the drawing room, where her Ladyſhip allowed him to wait a full hour before ſhe made her appearance.

She then entered. He deſcribed her to us (for you may believe we were minute in our enquiries) as a woman of a very majeſtic figure, but whoſe addreſs, imperious and diſdainful, freezes the beholder

beholder at firſt ſight, and inſpires only diſtance and reſerve.

I had the favour of a letter from you ſome time ago, Sir, ſaid ſhe, but as I imagined the ſubject of which it treated would be better diſcuſſed by an interview than by writing, I delayed an anſwer till it was in my power to come to town. You tell me Sir, continued ſhe, that two daughters of the late unfortunate Lord Linroſe are come over from his retreat in France, under the idea that my Lord Belmont will be induced to countenance and acknowledge them. This, admitting that *they really are* his children, was ſurely a very ſtrange and unaccountable ſtep. It is indeed extraordinary to ſuppoſe that his Lordſhip, ſo juſtly irritated againſt their father, whoſe ill conduct, not to ſay crimes, have been the deſtruction of his peace and the ruin of his conſtitution, will be eaſily if ever prevailed with to favour

vour with his notice, two girls who are the pledges of family diſhonour, and the offspring of a calamity which has loaded his declining years with affliction. I think it would have been at leaſt prudent in their friends to have adviſed them to ſound my Lord's intentions before they ventured on a proceeding ſo raſh as that of leaving the Continent without his permiſſion.

Mr. Howard then explained that our journey was in conſequence of the commands of a gentleman who had been left our guardian, but who on our arrival we found had unfortunately expired a few days before.

I am much ſurpriſed, ſaid ſhe, that any gentleman ſhould take upon him to act in ſuch intricate circumſtances without my Lord Belmont's approbation, who alone was empowered to fix their reſidence where he pleaſed.

Mr. Benſeley could not be certain,

Madam,

Madam, ſaid Mr. Howard, that my Lord would at all concern himſelf about his grand children, after the unhappy event which had ſo long excluded them from his knowledge: it was therefore natural in him to propoſe what plan he thought moſt conducive to their advantage, deferring an application to his Lordſhip till the arrival of the young ladies in England; when he doubted not they would ſufficiently plead their own cauſe the moment they were preſented to his ſight.

Indeed the aſſiſtance of natural affection, continued Mr. Howard, would have been, I am perſuaded, hardly neceſſary to ſubdue his Lordſhip's feelings on this occaſion; however irritated they might prove, a heart like Lord Belmont's could not have beheld unmoved, two lovely young women, bleſt with every amiable quality of the heart and every inſinuating grace of the form, kneeling

at

at his feet for favour; and I am convinced when your Ladyſhip has once ſeen them, an inſtantaneous prepoſſeſſion muſt inevitably follow.

His Lordſhip, had he been in England, replied ſhe with coldneſs, would doubtleſs have acted in that caſe as he thought proper. I perceive however, Sir, that you appear much too ſanguine in your expectations. None of Lord Belmont's friends have ever dared for many years to revive the recollection of the unhappy tranſactions relating to the late Lord, by any mention of him or his family; a ſubject which muſt have given an infinite ſhock to a frame ſo exhauſted and reduced as my Lord's now is; nor is it my own private opinion, founded on a perfect knowledge of the inflexibility of his temper, that he will ever be perſuaded to beſtow his favour or countenance on his unfortunate ſon's children.

My endeavours, however, ſhall not be wanting, Sir, to prevail with him, if poſſible, to perform what certainly would be an act of humanity; and as the young ladies are probably anxious to know their deſtiny, ſhall not only write to Lord Belmont to enforce their claims, but ſhall take courage to aſſail him with all the rhetoric in my power. He is at preſent at Nice, and his anſwer cannot be long in finding its way hither.

Mr. Howard thanked her Ladyſhip in warm terms for this offer, which in ſome meaſure ſoftened the harſh ſeverity of her preceding diſcourſe, and kindly added a thouſand circumſtances and recommendations calculated to animate and encourage the dawning intereſt ſhe began to teſtify in the cauſe.

There is however one thing I muſt premiſe Sir, added ſhe; the young ladies may perhaps be led to expect that I will invite them to my houſe, and give them

them my notice and protection; but till my Lord's reſolution is known, I muſt be excuſed from venturing on a conduct which I have reaſon to apprehend may meet with his diſapprobation. The hour that brings me his Lordſhip's permiſſion, I ſhall receive my nieces with all the cordiality and ſatisfaction imaginable; till that arrives, I muſt needs ſay that I think the more private they remain, and the leſs they are beheld in public, the better; and I ſhould adviſe their friends to perſuade them into this meaſure.

Mr. Howard, who by the expreſſion *their friends* knew was meant only himſelf, replied—your Ladyſhip cannot imagine that in this country, where the young ladies arrived ſo lately, they poſſeſs many friends; but I hope, as they are perfectly deſerving of thoſe given them by nature, a prejudice, which you muſt allow me to call unjuſt, will not

deprive them of one day poſſeſſing their regard. I make no doubt but that till Lord Belmont's anſwer arrives, or till their relations chooſe to introduce them, they will not of themſelves incline either to aſſume the family name, which they have not yet borne, or to appear in the world as his grand children.

In this particular I approve extremely of their prudence and delicacy, anſwered her Ladyſhip, and ſincerely wiſh them the ſucceſs their conduct in this point ſo juſtly merits. Indeed it would be the height of impropriety to let the world into thoſe family ſecrets, till they can with propriety be diſcloſed; and they ought undoubtedly to continue under the name of Seymour till Lord Belmont allows of the change; and in the interim I ſhall moſt willingly undertake to convey any letter or packet the young ladies may be inclined to tranſmit to my Lord Belmont.

Well,

Well, my dear Sir, cried Fanny, who had watched his return at the window, what ſucceſs?

I am not much pleaſed with the intelligence your countenance divulges, cried I.

My face is not then to be truſted, ſaid he, for at this moment I ſcarce know whether to be pleaſed or not. Lady Linroſe has diſſatisfied me without giving me any juſt grounds for complaint. She expreſſes herſelf in your favour, and aſſures me ſhe will back your claims with all her intereſt, yet her manner, unintereſted and cold, contradicts what her tongue avers, and though rectitude may compel her to be your advocate, generoſity will not, I fear, induce her warmly to become your friend.

He then related minutely and circumſtantially all that had paſſed between them. I think, ſaid he, when he had concluded, you ought undoubtedly to addreſs your grand father in your own

name, nor truſt to the pen of another a cauſe of ſo much moment. A letter, warm from the heart, and breathing the genuine ſentiments of duty and affection, cannot fail to ſoften and intereſt him.

I agreed perfectly in this opinion, and inſtantly retired to ſet about the taſk. You will perhaps imagine that it would not prove an eaſy one: but I found it attended with no ſort of difficulty. To write forcibly, little more is neceſſary than to be animated thoroughly with your ſubject. In this caſe, a thouſand expreſſions of energy and warmth give a ſtrength and eloquence to your ſtyle not to be attained by an unimpaſſioned writer; and as I did not affect what my heart did not feel, my epiſtle was extremely ſimple, though my tears, by blotting ſeveral, obliged me to write more than one copy.

TO THE RIGHT HON. THE EARL OF BELMONT.

Will my Lord Belmont permit his grand children to addreſs him by the tender appellation which the ties of blood, and the moſt fervent ſentiments of duty and veneration, equally prompt them to uſe. Alas! it is but lately we knew there yet exiſted a parent to whom theſe feelings were ſtill due; and the ſame inſtant that beſtowed an information ſo unthought of, ſo fraught with wonder and perplexity, overwhelmed us with the ſudden knowledge of a thouſand cruel circumſtances to poiſon and embitter the pleaſing intelligence.

Among theſe, not the leaſt dreadful is the apprehenſion—an apprehenſion which ſinks us to the loweſt ebb of deſpondency—that this venerable parent may forbid our claims, and remain, as he has hither done, a ſtranger and unknown to us.

Oh! my Lord! can your heart always continue unmoved to the gentle and inſinuating voice of nature; or in a boſom, where rectitude is ſaid to hold its empire, can reſentment ſo long retain its violence, and prejudice its inflexibility. Ah! no! one day I truſt I ſhall bluſh for having for an inſtant encouraged a ſuſpicion ſo unworthy, ſo contrary to that juſtice which forms, we are told, the baſis of Lord Belmont's character. We ſhall not mourn a ſecond father, more cruelly torn from us than by the hands of death, while the traces of thoſe tears which flowed for the firſt are hardly effaced from our eyes.

We are in England, my Lord, by the advice of a gentleman who was left our guardian, and who I believe was once not unknown to you. We arrived about three weeks ago, and had the inexpreſſible mortification to find that Mr. Benſeley had expired but a few days before.

To

To add to this misfortune, we were told your Lordſhip was abroad; and informed that till you condeſcended to acknowledge us, thoſe of our family who remained could not venture to afford us even their notice.

I think I need inſiſt on no further particulars in order to enforce to your Lordſhip how uncomfortable, how painfully depreſſing, the ſituation of two young women muſt prove, who find themſelves in a foreign and unknown country, unconnected in the midſt of their numerous relations, and ſtrangers, tho' ſurrounded by their natural friends.

Till your Lordſhip's reſolution with regard to us is made known, we muſt continue in this obſcure, this miſerable ſtate, unacknowledged, unnoticed, and deſerted, whilſt unconſcious of meriting repulſe, or of deſerving this contempt and deſertion.

The favour of a few lines from your

Lordſhip's hand, directed under cover to Laurence Howard, Eſq. Britiſh Coffee Houſe, a gentleman to whom we are under infinite obligations, and with whoſe ſiſter we at preſent reſide, will either relieve our minds from a cruel load of painful ſuſpenſe or finally put a period to thoſe expectations, the uncertainty of which have deprived us for ſome months of comfort and reſt.

We remain, with unfeigned reſpect,
your Lordſhip's moſt dutiful children,

HERMIONE AND FRANCES DUDLEY.

I made Fanny join in the ſignature. It appeared very ſtrange to us to add a name ſo entirely new, nor could I hardly perſuade myſelf I had any right to claim it.

When the letter was finiſhed, I carried it down ſtairs in order to ſubmit it to Mr. Howard's peruſal, who was fortunately alone. He was affected with the warmth with which I had expreſſed myſelf:

myſelf: but my words were faint when compared with my feelings while I tranſmitted them to paper. Melted with the tender idea that I was yet allowed to addreſs myſelf to a ſurviving parent, I effaced the writing with my tears. A tear dropped down the cheek of Mr. Howard while he read. If Lord Belmont can indeed remain deaf to the voice of nature, ſaid he, when ſhe pleads in ſuch language as this, his heart cannot have been compoſed of thoſe flexible materials of which thoſe of other men are formed.

He undertook himſelf to give it this day to Lady Linroſe, that it might accompany her diſpatches for Nice.

H. SEYMOUR.

LET-

LETTER VIII.

TO MISS BEAUMONT.

JAN. 12.

THIS preſuming wretch Farnford, inſtead of avoiding me, as I flattered myſelf he would have done, after the repugnance I have teſtified towards the ſlighteſt intercourſe with him, this morning called while we were at breakfaſt.

It was both painful and awkward for me to find myſelf in the ſame room with him; and in ſpite of all Mrs. Hindon's attempts to draw me into converſation, I maintained a profound ſilence, looked grave and reſerved, and the moment I had done breakfaſt, left the parlour.

Mrs. Hin-

Mrs. Hindon, with all her civility, ſhews very little complaiſance in this particular. Though ſhe well knew the reluctance I felt to ſeeing him, ſhe had undoubtedly invited him to ſupper; for ſoon after he was gone ſhe came up ſtairs and informed me that the poor Captain found himſelf ſo miſerable when at a diſtance from me, that he had aſked leave to return in the evening.

I ſaid nothing, for certainly I had no right to preſcribe to Mrs. Hindon what company ſhe ſhould admit to her houſe; but the moment ſhe left me, I took a chair to Mrs. Weldon's, and in the Captain's ſtile aſked leave to ſpend the evening with her. She willingly conſented; and told me with her uſual kindneſs that there were to be a few friends with her, who would be equally pleaſed with an addition ſo agreeable to their party.

This is prudence with a witneſs, cried Mrs. Hin-

Mrs. Hindon, when I careleſsly informed her that I was engaged to ſup abroad. 'Tis all I ſuppoſe to avoid the poor Captain; but indeed Miſs Seymour when you have ſeen as much of the world as I have done, you'll have a little more indulgence for the frolics of twenty-five.

That I might run no chance of being caught by Farnford, I went early to Mrs. Weldon's: but indeed my dear Sophia I heartily regret I went at all.

The gueſts ſhe had mentioned, conſiſted of three gentlemen, who were extremely gay and exceſſively free in their manner. Their vivacity was indeed unbounded; and their behaviour ſo noiſy, not to ſay riotous, that I ſhould have imagined they could have inſpired only the moſt impenetrable gravity in any female companion. Inſtead of this, however, their mirth produced in Mrs. Weldon a flow of ſpirits ſo unreſtrained, that I could not avoid feeling to the laſt degree

gree

gree uncomfortable, and I would have given the world more than once for a pretence to have left the table.

I had not ſufficient courage however to betray ſo pointedly my diſapprobation; I therefore kept my ſeat, determining in my own mind to refuſe in future all Mrs. Weldon's invitations except to a *tete à tete*, when ſhe always appears in a point of view both amiable and reſpectable. But I took no part in the ſurrounding merriment, and very little in the converſation, although the gentlemen on each ſide addreſſed themſelves to me in a ſtyle of complimentary adoration perfectly new and almoſt incomprehenſible.

The moment the cloth was removed, I ordered a chair; reſolving not to wait for Mrs. Hindon's carriage, which was to attend me at a later hour; and told Mrs. Weldon that as that family were extremely regular, I ſhould be obliged to leave her ſooner than I wiſhed.

Indeed,

Indeed, cried the gentleman who ſat on my right hand, and who had been particularly violent in his expreſſions of admiration, we ſhall not permit you to be ſo cruel; and he ſeized my hand with an impetuoſity which terrified me.

It is not indeed in my power to ſtay, cried I, with no little reſentment in my voice. Mrs. Weldon joined earneſtly in entreating me not to break up the party; and the other gentlemen inſiſted ſo ſtrongly, that I was abſolutely conſtrained to ſit on, from the mere ſhame of diſcovering a degree of apprehenſion for I knew not what.

The gentlemen now began to ſing a number of drinking, or as they termed it *jovial* ſongs; many of which, if I might judge from the manner they were received, were by no means adapted for female ears; and the glaſs circulated ſo freely, that my ſituation every inſtant grew more diſagreeable. I was aſſailed

on

on each ſide with the moſt extravagant flattery; and all my attempts to riſe were received with ſuch violent oppoſition, that I had not reſolution to undergo them, and therefore forced myſelf to remain till it was near twelve. I then got up, and declared I was determined to go.

There is but one way of putting a period to ſo barbarous a determination, cried one of the gentlemen, and ſpringing forward to the door, he turned the key, and put it with an air of gay triumph into his pocket.

My conſternation at this manœuvre was beyond conception, and I turned to Mrs. Weldon with a look of aſtoniſhment for which I could not find words. It was, you may conclude, not much abated from obſerving that inſtead of openly avowing her diſpleaſure, ſhe laughed extremely at my apparent diſtreſs. Come my dear, cried ſhe, ſince you are kept priſoner, tis in vain to reſiſt.

Let

Let us all ſit down for an hour longer at leaſt, and Sir Edward will favour us with another ſong.

No, Madam, cried I much provoked, tis my intention to be gone, and go I will. I beg and entreat Sir, turning to the gentleman, you will open the door and allow me to be gone. I aſk it as a favour Sir.

Why then Madam, cried he gayly, with the grant of another you ſhall purchaſe this favour with all my ſoul.

What muſt I do then? cried I.

Pay the door keeper, Madam, advancing with an air of the moſt impertinent effrontery.

Nay that's but juſt by G— called out the others, burſting into a loud laugh.

I was ſo confounded with this audacious behaviour, that I could not utter a ſyllable; but retiring to my ſeat, I turned ſuddenly ſick, and grew ſo pale that they all concluded I was going to faint.

Mrs. Wel-

Mrs. Weldon's mirth, on obſerving this change, was converted into apprehenſion. You have carried your wit greatly too far, Gentlemen, cried ſhe; and Sir Edward inſtantly procuring the key from the other, uttered a thouſand proteſtations of grief and regret for having given me a moment's uneaſineſs.

Mrs. Weldon then led me to her dreſſing room, from whence a ſervant was ordered to call a chair. She made me a thouſand apologies for having allowed me to be ſo ſeverely tormented; but concluded, ſhe ſaid, I would not mind the innocent frolic of a party of gay-hearted young men who were not quite ſober.

I do not think them proper company for either of us, Madam, in ſuch a ſituation, cried I, nor can I call a frolic innocent which was in my opinion to the laſt degree impudent to attempt and humiliating to receive.

I ſpoke with warmth, for indeed the party

party altogether had ſhocked and confounded me extremely.

Oh the pretty little prude, cried ſhe in a tone of ironical vivacity; indeed, my dear, you muſt expect on entering the world to behold a number of things which will appear equally ſtrange and unaccountable to you. Pray do you imagine that all men are as grave as your father, or as ſententious as Mr. Howard? Young men will be gay, and ſometimes forget themſelves. I diſapprove of any flagrant breach of propriety as much as you or any one elſe can do, but to be ſometimes abſurd gives a guſt to life.

The chair being now come, I bad her coldly adieu, and returned home extremely hurt to perceive the notions of a perſon, for whom I really feel an affection, ſo diſſimilar to my own, and grieved to find that her unfortunate ſpirit of coquetry obſcured and concealed a thouſand good qualities.

Adieu

Adieu! my Sophia. My deſire to hear from you augments every hour. Your delightful journal, which uſed formerly to conſtitute my chief amuſement, will now prove my conſolation in all my troubles, as your friendſhip is my ſupport in every difficulty. The anxiety in which we muſt ſome time longer remain, wears out in ſome meaſure my ſpirits, though I do not allow myſelf to brood over vexations that have not actually arrived; on the contrary, I am beginning to prepare for the worſt, that is to ſay, for Lord Belmont's inflexibility, and often ſay to myſelf—if my family ſhould perſiſt in deſerting me, I ſtill poſſeſs my dear Fanny and my invaluable Sophia, and theſe two bleſſings, when put in the ſcale againſt all the comforts and advantages reſulting from being cordially received into the family of my grand father, deſirable as is that event, make them

them appear lighter than air. Adieu, my love.

H. SEYMOUR.

LETTER IX.

TO MISS BEAUMONT.

JAN. 15.

YOUR kind packet was brought me this morning. A thouſand, thouſand thanks to my beloved Sophia, for the warm friendſhip and affection which breathes in every line. Such a friend, at all times an invaluable treaſure, is in our preſent ſituation if poſſible ſtill more unſpeakably precious: for when we now look around us, there remains not one other perſon, Madame de Clarence excepted,

cepted, to whom that tender appellation is due; and even ſhe is not a Sophia.

One part of your letter actually dyed my cheeks with bluſhes, although I read it in private. How can you rally me ſo unmercifully becauſe I deſcribed our fellow traveller to be what he really is—a very agreeable man. I did not tell you he was an Adonis, nor did I expreſs myſelf, if I recollect, in terms of greater warmth than the politeneſs of his attentions merited from me. That he is handſome, and uncommonly engaging in his manner, is no more than you yourſelf muſt have acknowledged had you alſo been of the party. I confeſs however I have been ſeveral times a little apprehenſive of your animadverſions upon different parts of my journal, tho' I did not imagine you would have taken ſuch *ſtrange* notions ſo *early* into your head.

If you have become already ſuſpicious, how

how much elated will you prove, and how vain of your ſagacity, when you receive the latter part of my journal, where you find I have again met with *my hero*, as you call him. I am conſcious I have laid myſelf ſtill more open to ridicule in ſome of my laſt packets than even when you took the hint with ſo much avidity from nothing.

I freely acknowledge, however, that the natural eagerneſs of my temper may have led me to expreſs myſelf with an energy which was perhaps abſurd enough; but I am accuſtomed, to *my* Sophia, *to think on paper*; I give every idea full latitude, and never once reflect how ridiculous I may often appear.

You command me, you ſay, on my *allegiance*, to confeſs faithfully if I do not find myſelf inclined to be a little more ſolicitous about this Oroondates than I ever was about the Chevalier de Mertane, or any other man? Indeed, my

dear

dear, this is by no means putting the matter to a fair trial; for to compare Mr. Roatſley with the Chevalier argues nothing in the world in favour of your opinion, the latter being determinedly diſagreeable to me; and there is a material difference I hope between acknowledging that a man is agreeable and being in love with him. That I think Mr. Roatſley the moſt agreeable man I have yet met with, I ſincerely confeſs; but I can think him ſo, and even indulge a wiſh for further intimacy, without concluding myſelf in the ſlighteſt danger.

I will confeſs to you, however, my ſweet friend, and let the openneſs of my heart put a final period to your raillery on this ſubject, that ſince the night of the play, when I think I muſt have given him cauſe for thinking meanly of me, I have ſuffered more uneaſineſs than ſuch a trifle ought to have occaſioned; and the

recollection that this change in his behaviour was antecedent to Farnford's appearance in the party, adds to my perplexity and encreaſes my regret.

As he appears to be intimate with Captain Bradſhaw, perhaps the latter has hinted ſuſpicions of my prudence and thus overturned the favourable ſentiments which at Dover Roatſley ſeemed inclined to feel for his new acquaintances; yet his polite and attentive behaviour when I met with him at Drury-lane Theatre, entirely contradicts this idea, and was indeed totally different from the cold diſtance and civil reſerve with which his manner was impreſſed the laſt time I ſaw him at the theatre. He did not appear the ſame man, at leaſt he certainly was not actuated by the ſame feelings.

This confeſſion may lead you to ſuſpect the weakneſs of my heart, and I have ſeverely condemned myſelf for allowing

lowing the opinion of a ſtranger to influence me ſo far: yet I really believe pride alone is at the bottom of my uneaſineſs. I am hurt to have fallen in the eſteem of a man, who, in ſpite of your raillery, appears ſuperior to moſt of his ſex. I formed no wiſhes from his acquaintance, but that he might prove an agreeable acquiſition to our ſociety; therefore I could experience, I imagined, but a ſlight diſappointment. Yet I allow that I have permitted his behaviour to intereſt me too much; and ſince it has been ſo remarkable as to excite your obſervation even ſo early, I give you my word I will exert myſelf to think of it no more.

JAN. 16.

Were it not for the uneaſy ſuſpenſe in which we muſt remain till Lord Bel-

mont's reſolution is known, our reſidence here would not be ſo uncomfortable as I at firſt concluded it would prove. Mr. Hindon is a good natured man, and of a very ſociable diſpoſition. He keeps an hoſpitable table, to which he generally brings home two or three gueſts every day, and theſe he treats with eaſe and benevolence without oſtentation. They are not, to be ſure, men of very brilliant manners, or whoſe ſociety can be deemed extremely deſirable; being uſually friends from Change, about his own age; men who have ſpent their lives in the plodding purſuits of gain, to the acquiſition of which all their talents have been invariably exerted—I had almoſt ſaid *exhauſted*, for their converſation ſeldom diſplays either knowledge of arts or taſte for attainments that lead not to the great end of becoming rich. They claim, however, the merit of induſtry; and though ſometimes I am confounded with

with their vulgarity, in men paſſed the middle of life one is leſs ſhocked with that roughneſs which proceeds from plain dealing than with the ſmart and forward attempts made by ſome of the beaux of this line to appear *degagè* men of the world againſt nature and education.

Mrs. Hindon, though far ſhort of my ſanguine expectations, is a well-meaning woman, and by no means deficient in ſeveral good qualities. Theſe are indeed often obſcured by the want of one which beſtows luſtre on every other, I mean *delicacy*. She would not willingly inflict a wound, if ſhe was conſcious of its poignancy; but ſhe is totally deſtitute of thoſe feelings which tell when anothers are hurt. Without being generous, ſhe does not fail in point of charity; I mean that branch of the duty that conſiſts in giving alms. She keeps excellent order in her family, piques herſelf upon being an active œconomiſt,

goes ſeldom into public, and is not given to diſſipation. Our hours are early and regular, at leaſt when compared with thoſe which prevail in this country, and our evenings are generally ſpent at home, where now and then an eaſy friend joins the family party.

I have diſcovered one ſtriking feature in Mrs. Hindon's character, to which perhaps may be attributed her unbounded civility to us. Yet I own it is unfair to place her kindneſs in a light that deprives it of all its merit. She was herſelf of very low extraction, and probably for that reaſon has attached an idea of importance to rank and family, which induces her to attend with the moſt ſedulous regard and reſpect to all who have the ſlighteſt claim to diſtinction. Since our abode here, I have ſuſpected a ſcheme, which repeated obſervation now convinces me is not without foundation. Captain Wilmot, Mrs. Hindon's nephew,

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in a manner lives in her houſe; and except at the ſeaſons of ſleeping or dreſſing, makes conſtantly one of the family. He is become of late extremely particular in his attentions to Fanny, and continually entertains her in a ſort of half whiſper, which gives their converſation the air of a *tete à tete*. He is good-looking, though extremely vacant and inſipid; but having received the poliſh of a military education, is enabled to hold forth with eaſe and fluency in a complimentary ſtyle to which Fanny has no ſort of averſion. I have been a good deal alarmed, leſt, as ſhe is young and completely inexperienced, *les petits ſoins de Monſieur le Capitaine*, ſhould prove more ſucceſsful than were to be wiſhed. I have not failed therefore, in talking of him in private, to throw a degree of ridicule upon his behaviour and appearance, of all weapons the moſt dangerous againſt which a lover can contend, and

as Fanny is not extremely ſuſceptible, I think my plan will prove the deſtruction of Mrs. Hindon's; for that ſhe is at the bottom of the Captain's paſſion, and has beſtowed the proper ſupplies of fuel to blow it into a flame, I have no manner of doubt. Indeed her deſire of aggrandizing her family by an alliance with Lord Belmont's, might alone have induced her to promote a match between Fanny and her nephew; but I make no doubt that beſides this motive, to a young man who is not in affluent circumſtances, Fanny's ten thouſand pounds, added to the expectations which Mrs. Hindon often inſinuates we may juſtly form from our grand father's liberality, would be an addition extremely deſirable. After all, he may be ſincerely enamoured, for Fanny poſſeſſes charms capable of intereſting more refined ſentiments than I ſuſpect the Captain to poſſeſs; yet I recollect we were ſome time here before he ſeemed to know ſhe was even in the ſame

room

room with him, and his ſolicitude took its riſe all of a ſudden, without any apparent cauſe for the alteration, after an appearance of the moſt frigid indifference.

My ſuſpicions that the ſcheme was firſt ſuggeſted to him by his aunt, have been confirmed from remarking that Mrs. Hindon takes every opportunity of laviſhing the moſt exaggerated encomiums on her nephew. He is the very beſt young man in the world; given to no vice; always kept himſelf out of the mad frolics of his military companions; and ſo good a ſon, that ſhe made no doubt he would make a figure equally reſpectable in every other department of life.

Beſides, don't you think him extremely handſome, Miſs Fanny? I'm ſure if you had been within hearing of what he ſaid of you laſt night, you muſt have been flattered, though there was not one word of flattery in the caſe. He de-

clared you was in his opinion—you muſt excuſe me, Miſs Seymour—by far the handſomeſt of the two, and ſo amiable, and ſo elegant, and ſo like a young lady of the firſt quality. However I give you my word, Miſs Seymour, he allows you to be what all the world muſt acknowledge—compleatly lovely; but Miſs Fanny, he ſays, is an angel, and I think he is fairly caught at laſt.

You ſee, my dear, by this little trait, that Mrs. Hindon, with all her errors, is not in the leaſt artful. Indeed I believe this plan no ſooner occurred to herſelf, than, though without intending it, ſhe contrived to communicate it to me. She is indeed incapable even of a prudent concealment; and when ſhe imagines her deſigns (for ſhe has a very active turn of mind) are cunningly hidden from every eye, a ſlight degree of penetration only is required to pierce through the thin diſguiſe. She does not ſpare flattery

tery you may perceive on this occaſion; and as ſhe knows the influence which two years ſeniority, added to the warmeſt attachment, have given me over Fanny's mind, you ſee I get my ſhare of it, as a perſon whom it is neceſſary to bring over to her intereſt.

I think Mr. Howard has likewiſe made a diſcovery of the ſcheme, which evidently meets with his diſapprobation; for he always appears chagrined and diſpleaſed when Wilmot joins us, and regards him with a ſcrutinizing eye when he whiſpers ſoft nonſenſe into Fanny's ear.

Indeed to a mind like his, ſo fraught with rectitude and good ſenſe, the utter impropriety of ſuch a ſtep muſt appear in full force; and I make no doubt that conſidering himſelf at preſent in the light of our guardian, he holds himſelf reſponſible to Lord Belmont for our conduct. While under his immediate, his ſole direction, were this affair to involve

Fanny

Fanny in a marriage ſo imprudent, it muſt reflect extremely even on Mr. Howard's character; ſince from his connection with Wilmot, it would undoubtedly appear to Lord Belmont as having received his ſecret concurrence and approbation.

Of ſuch a conduct, I am convinced Mr. Howard is incapable, even were he to draw from the event the moſt deſirable conſequences to himſelf: but independent of this idea, I am miſtaken if a more forcible motive does not give additional weight to the repugnance with which he beholds Wilmot's aſſiduities.

I believe I once hinted to you, that Mr. Howard, during the infancy of our acquaintance, was extremely particular in his attentions to me. He was ever ſolicitous for my company, and ſought my converſation with eagerneſs and aſſiduity. His behaviour at length alarmed me, and mine plainly told him how unſucceſsful any application beyond the limits

limits of friendſhip would prove; for though I eſteem, I admire his merits, and there is none of his ſex for whoſe character I have a higher reſpect; though his manners beſpeak his mind, and convey the mild benevolence of his nature into every look and motion; and though his years would not have been with me a material objection, yet, yet, Sophia, I could not have loved him. You will call me romantic perhaps; but never could Mr. Howard have enjoyed that tender intereſt in my heart which my lover muſt poſſeſs ere he becomes my huſband. My ſentiments partake of thoſe a daughter feels for her parent. They are thoſe of confidence, dependence, and gratitude; but they are far removed from thoſe ſoft, cordial, and inſinuating ties which make the duties of a wife her firſt happineſs, and enable her almoſt to exiſt but for the man to whom ſhe has given her hand.

When

When Fanny returned from the convent, (for it was during her abode there that our acquaintance with Mr. Howard commenced) he was ſtruck with her appearance: but he regarded her as a beautiful child, and was more delighted with her *naivetè* than her converſation; and though he often entered into chat, he never diſcourſed with her: till our misfortune in loſing our dear parent, by throwing us entirely under his care, made him feel Fanny's dependence, which at the period of my illneſs reſted ſolely on him, as a peculiar charm that ſeemed to ſoften and affect him.

While we travelled, ſhe leant on him for ſupport in every difficulty or alarm. To him every enquiry was made, and from him every explanation was expected; and there are few men, I believe, in whom the idea of protection, exerted towards a young and pleaſing object, will not create a tender intereſt, which if it

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is not love, partakes extremely of the ſame ſentiment.

As for me, my ſpirits oppreſſed and my temper independent, I truſted a little more to myſelf, nor conſulted Mr. Howard but when circumſtances called for counſel and aſſiſtance. To me therefore he ever behaves with reſpect and the moſt flattering regard; but to Fanny, his addreſs has ſtill more ſoftneſs; he appears as if he conſidered her peculiarly his charge, and to gratify her in any little wiſh, however whimſical, evidently confers pleaſure on himſelf.

Yet if my ſuſpicions of his ſecret partiality are founded on truth, (for I will not pretend to be certain whether my ſurmizes are not partly the chimeras of my own imagination) he is acting on this occaſion like a man of honour, and as I ſhould have expected from his character. His attentions are thoſe which may be felt, but except by myſelf, I am certain

certain never have been remarked; nor has he once betrayed a wiſh to inſinuate himſelf into her good graces. No doubt he is conſcious that a man of moderate fortune cannot be conſidered by Lord Belmont as a match for his grand child; who, if he means to acknowledge her, muſt poſſeſs a variety of advantages, according to the world's opinion, ſufficient to carry a grandfather's views infinitely higher; neither is he inſenſible, I dare ſay, to the inequality of their years.

A girl of ſixteen, with all the thoughtleſſneſs incident to her time of life, encreaſed perhaps by the retirement of her education, cannot appear to ſober reaſon an elligible choice for a grave, ſedate man of forty three, whoſe proſpects of happineſs have probably been centered in expecting an amiable companion rather than a beloved miſtreſs, in the woman whom he makes the partner of his life. Yet probably thoſe very men, Sophia,

may

may not prove leſs liable than others to be caught by the charms of youth; and when that is the caſe, partiality no doubt perſuades them they have diſcovered the miſtreſs and companion in one, and that they may be able to mould a young and innocent mind as they pleaſe.

I am miſtaken if Mr. Howard's imagination has not ſometimes ſecretly ſuggeſted ſome ſuch ideas; though further than concealed wiſhes, I am confident hey never will proceed.

LETTER X.

TO MISS BEAUMONT.

JANUARY 20.

THIS interval of ſome days has produced occurrences of the moſt diſtreſſing nature. Oh! my Sophia, why was I ever prevailed on to quit our quiet retreat in Languedoc? why has fate condemned me to viſit a country, where, ſince the moment of my arrival, I have encountered only diſappointments, againſt which I muſt ſtruggle, and difficulties with which I muſt contend.

Yeſterday morning Mrs. Hindon propoſed carrying us to the ſale of a nobleman's furniture and effects, who had lately ruined

ruined himſelf by extravagance and a fatal paſſion for play. Curioſity, ſhe told us, had brought the whole town together on this occaſion: numbers, who never thought of becoming purchaſers flocking to the auction to behold the ſplendor and elegance of the articles expoſed to view.

This not being an amuſement for which I imagined I ſhould have much reliſh, I declined being of the party; and ſoon after Fanny and ſhe were gone, Mrs. Weldon called. She was ſo extremely agreeable, and made ſo many apologies for the behaviour of herſelf and company the evening I ſpent at her houſe, that I could not help cordially forgiving, tho' in my heart I could not thoroughly excuſe her.

You muſt conſider my dear, ſaid ſhe, that your ideas and mine on certain points cannot fail to be extremely oppoſite. You have been educated in abſolute ſolitude, and muſt have taken your opinions either

either from reading, which is a very erroneous guide to form your ſentiments upon, and one that ever leads to narrow prejudices and contracted notions, or have imbibed your rules of manners from the converſation of your father, who lived in the laſt age, at leaſt in times that did not allow of thoſe freedoms that the preſent fully authorize. As for me, beſides the ſanction which matrimony at a very early period of life gave to the natural gaiety of my temper, I have ſeen a good deal of the world; my character therefore is eſtabliſhed. I fear not the voice of cenſure; and thoſe gentlemen whoſe mirth offended you ſo much, were men I have long known; two of them were my relations; and you muſt allow that in the midſt of their life and ſpirit no real impropriety was thought of.

Though I did not exactly agree in this opinion, I allowed it to paſs without endeavouring to confute it; and after ſit-

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ting an hour, during which Mrs. Weldon converſed ſo rationally and agreeably that ſhe made me entirely forget my reſentment, ſhe took leave, being engaged ſhe ſaid with her lawyers at a certain hour; having firſt made me promiſe to dine with her two days hence, when ſhe aſſured me there ſhould be no company except a female relation, with whom ſhe was certain I ſhould be much pleaſed.

As Mrs. Weldon's company is at all times really delightful, for ſhe poſſeſſes the art of rendering the moſt trifling occurrences intereſting from the inſinuating gaiety with which ſhe relates them, I conſented; having firſt confeſſed that I hoped none of the gentlemen of her laſt party would join us. If any of them call, cried ſhe laughing, I promiſe you I ſhall give orders to be denied, ſince the pretty little prude will have it ſo.

After ſhe was gone, having a little time to myſelf, which is not often the caſe,

caſe, I recollected that I had ſome trifling buſineſs to tranſact with Mrs. Brumpton, my late landlady, relating to part of our baggage, which ſtill remained at her houſe; and as I wiſhed to make Mrs. Hindon a trifling preſent of a very pretty work box which was packed in one of the trunks under Mrs. Brumpton's care, I ſent Dubois acroſs the ſquare, for it is not much further, to aſk if ſhe was at home, and to let her know I ſhould call ſome time that morning to ſpeak with her; and half an hour after I ordered my chair and went.

The maid conducted me into a ſmall parlour, ſaying indiſpenſible buſineſs had carried her miſtreſs out for a few moments, but that ſhe had left orders if I came to beg the favour of me to wait her return. I confeſs I thought this rather a freedom in the woman; however I ſat down, expecting ſhe would ſoon appear.

My attention was in a ſhort time rouſed

rouſed by hearing a gentleman give orders to his ſervant, ſo near, that I found only a thin partition ſeparated the room in which I was placed from that occupied by our late fellow lodger, Captain Bradſhaw. He appeared employed in aſſiſting the packing of ſome guns, and other ſhooting implements, about which he ſeemed as anxiouſly careful as if his life had depended on their arriving undamaged at the end of their deſtined journey. He was extremely buſy, and whiſtled with great vociferation ſeveral little cotillion tunes at preſent in vogue.

Some time after I heard the door of his apartment open, and a gentleman enter.—Well Tom, cried a voice which I inſtantly knew to be Mr. Roatſley's, you are preparing to be gone I find.

Yes, I am ſending off all my ſhooting apparatus, in hopes that ſince I muſt go I may find ſome amuſement in making havock among the partridges. I am told there

there is excellent ſport on Sir Edward's grounds; and I may as well take ten days of it as not.

There is a vaſt quantity of game about that part of the country, anſwered Mr. Roatſley. Perhaps I may take it into my head to pay you a viſit at your quarters, after my election buſineſs is concluded.

I wiſh to God you would. But for my own part the devil take me if any thing under heaven ſhould drive me from town at this ſeaſon, while I had a full purſe, and leave from the regiment to ſpend it where I pleaſed.

Heaven knows what my feelings by that time may be, ſaid the other, but at preſent I find myſelf equally incapable of reliſhing the pleaſures of the town or the amuſements of the country.

Yes you are fairly caught at laſt, cried Bradſhaw, laughing heartily: Cupid has revenged himſelf with a vengeance; and you

you know I always told you he would one day prove doubly ſevere. She is divinely handſome it muſt be confeſſed, and I believe the little god never aimed his darts from brighter eyes than thoſe of your Dulcinea. They would alone conſtitute a beauty without the aſſiſtance of any other perfect feature.

There is at leaſt, replied his friend, a character—an expreſſion—a ſomething about her altogether that intereſts me beyond what any other woman was ever capable of effecting.

A character! replied the other redoubling his mirth. But indeed we have always been told that love is blind.

Think, my deareſt Sophia, if your ſuſpicions had any real foundation, and much I fear there was more cauſe in your raillery than I ever dreaded, think what I felt at this inſtant. From the time of Roatſley's entering, I had ſuffered agitation unſpeakable, and had liſ-

tened with eager anxiety to this diſcourſe; but at the laſt ſentence my heart beat with augmented violence, and I waited with inexpreſſible impatience to learn the name of that happy woman whom at this painful moment I ſcrupled not to confeſs I envied. Breathleſs with expectation, I heard Mr. Roatſley after a ſhort pauſe reply—Well, Bradſhaw, in ſpite of appearances, which I acknowledge are by no means in her favour, I cannot for my ſoul think of her for an inſtant in a diſreſpectful point of view. When I reflect on her behaviour during the ſhort period of our acquaintance, it ſeemed to evince a ſuperior turn of mind; far from giving way to her fears in a ſtorm which might juſtly have excuſed the moſt immoderate and well grounded apprehenſions, ſhe exerted herſelf in the moſt amiable manner to calm and allay the weaker terrors of her ſiſter, who ſunk under her alarm; inceſſantly endeavouring to inſpire that

hope

hope and conſolation which ſhe herſelf equally required at a moment ſo tremendous. Struck with her uncommon beauty, I took advantage of her ſituation to offer her thoſe little attentions which any woman in ſimilar circumſtances would have claimed from me, but which in performing to this unknown fair, gratified me beyond expreſſion. Her fears, ſo unaffected, ſo ſevere, yet ſo little indulged, rendered her at once the object of my admiration and tendereſt compaſſion. There were a thouſand charms in every word, in every look; and a certain ſlight degree of a foreign accent, which in another might have appeared a defect, gave a peculiar ſoftneſs to the tone of her voice, the force of which I felt without being able to define it.

The alarming ſituation in which I beheld her, gave birth to a thouſand circumſtances that all conſpired to delight and intereſt me. Nor did the evening I

ſpent in her company at Dover, fail to heighten and augment my firſt impreſſions in her favour. Her manner poſſeſſed a poliſhed ſimplicity, and her converſation a refined good ſenſe, which diffuſed a mutual luſtre on each other, and which inſinuated her into my heart beyond all power of reſiſtance; and although I was obliged to get to the Abbey by the day I had mentioned to my mother, and had hardly time ſufficient to fulfil my promiſe, yet I allowed many hours to elapſe before I could prevail with myſelf to quit the inn where the lovely Miſs Seymour was.

Is it then *me* at laſt—*me* indeed—cried I to myſelf, out of breath with expectation and wholly exhauſted with agitation.

During the preceding ſpeech, it is not eaſy to deſcribe what were my perturbations. At one time elated with hopes, which at another ſunk into apprehenſions, I feared to flatter myſelf deluſively; nor

nor till I heard my name diſtinctly pronounced could I be perſuaded that the woman he had been deſcribing with all the exaggerated encomiums of an impaſſioned heart, could indeed be myſelf.

The ſenſations of pleaſure which ruſhed into my mind, were ſoon however mixed with a bitterneſs that poiſoned every riſing ſatisfaction.

When I call to mind her behaviour, continued he, both during that evening and every ſucceeding one when I have been ſo fortunate as to converſe with her; when I recollect her manner, ſo ſoft, ſo unaffected, ſo inexpreſſibly engaging, how is it poſſible to reconcile all this with the account which the woman here gives of the whole party. I cannot recollect one inſtance of the lighteſt appearance of levity either in Miſs Seymour or her ſiſter, who is the very picture of innocence itſelf, nor would it have been in the power of any perſon on earth to have made me

for one inſtant give credit to the aſperſion on her character, had not my eyes witneſſed that ſhe can forgive an inſult which a delicate woman never could have pardoned.

After all, ſaid Captain Bradſhaw, Mrs. Brumpton does not abſolutely aver that they are abandoned girls, though it muſt be owned ſhe ſeems to inſinuate more than ſhe chuſes to divulge; and laſt night when I queſtioned her again according to your deſire, ſhe told me that when under the eye of their Argus, no girls can behave with greater propriety, but that the inſtant his back is turned they do not appear the ſame creatures.

What I at this moment heard affected me ſo violently that I became incapable for ſome minutes of attending to what they ſaid; on renewing my attention I found Roatſley was ſpeaking.

You may conclude then, ſaid he, how ſhocked I muſt be to learn that there were a variety

a variety of rumours to the diſadvantage of this family, with which I was ſo much charmed. I was indeed inexpreſſibly hurt to find any mortal dared to think diſreſpectfully of any one of them; yet I diſbelieved every ſyllable that was uttered. I could not diſcredit the evidence of my eyes, which traced every amiable quality and every ſentiment of female dignity in the countenance and manner of Miſs Seymour. As for her ſiſter, ſhe is alſo very lovely, and the innocent youthfulneſs of her appearance accords ill with your report. Mr. Howard I have enquired after; and find he is eſteemed a man of ſenſe and character, neither given to vice nor even accuſed of exceſs; I muſt therefore repeat, that I think the notion of their being his wards is infinitely more probable (even ſetting aſide the appearance of the ladies, which indeed renders any other opinion abſolutely impoſſible,) than that there ſhould be any

illicit connection in the caſe. That part of the ſtory I am therefore thoroughly convinced is an infamous ſlander.

Wounded to the ſoul by this dreadful, this inconceivable explanation of the motives of Mr. Roatſley's late behaviour, oh! Sophia, what were my pangs, what was my mortification, during a recital which ſunk my ſpirits from the higheſt elevation to the loweſt deſpondency. Scarce could I keep myſelf from fainting at the cruel and painful concluſion of encomiums which had excited ſuch infinite pride and pleaſure. My heart died within me; yet I anxiouſly liſtened to what ſhould follow, while my eyes were drowned in tears of vexation and regret.

The girl may be thoughtleſs and inconſiderate, returned Bradſhaw, without being abſolutely void of delicacy; and their being with Lady Farnford certainly argues in favour of their reputation. The idea of their being French courte-

zans

zans is not by any means probable: but ſhould they turn out ſo you have ſtill leſs reaſon to ſigh Roatſley, for your fair one will not prove cruel.

It is utterly impoſſible! cried Roatſley with warmth. I am perfectly convinced of the abominable falſhood of that inſinuation. Miſs Seymour may be weak, vain, and volatile, (though even in theſe points I am unconvinced,) for I will not pretend to aver that firſt ſight impreſſions, eſpecially where an intereſting figure is in queſtion, are always to be taken as proof; but to attack her moral character is an aſperſion which one look muſt compleatly and ſufficiently confute. I own I am hurt and confounded at the variety of reports which pour in upon me from more quarters than one: they have even reached the ears of my mother, though ſhe never ſaw either of them in her life, nor could have heard even their names repeated till within theſe few days. Miſs

Seymour has fallen I acknowledge from the high ideas I had conceived of her character, but never for an inſtant can I do her ſo material an injury as to ſuſpect her reputation.

There are men, ſaid Mr. Bradſhaw, who in your ſituation would not regret if that point continued doubtful.

No, cried his friend, the woman who has once poſſeſſed the power of inſpiring me with a paſſion almoſt equally compounded of tenderneſs and eſteem, cannot preſerve the firſt while ſhe loſes all claim to the latter. My love for Miſs Seymour could not ſubſiſt independent of that delicacy which gives it a charm refined and inexpreſſible; nor would I enjoy if I might the fruits of a fall which I ſhould ever lament. But I am conſcious I am injuring her in mentioning her name under ſuch a ſurmiſe. Pray what ſays your watch? This ſubject carries me too far; and I have an engagement at four.

'Tis

'Tis almoſt that hour, cried the other; and both the gentlemen roſe to go.

I trembled from head to foot as they paſſed the door of the parlour, leſt any accident ſhould have diſcovered me; but I was ſoon rid of my fears as they left the houſe directly.

What do you think, my dear Sophia, of this converſation, ſo wholly inconceivable? Scarce have I preſerved reſolution and patience ſufficient for relating it minutely, without often interrupting my narration by the ſilent ejaculations and the different emotions to which at the time it gave riſe. To delineate my various feelings of mortification, diſdain and vexation, would be perfectly impoſſible. I think however you may in ſome meaſure ſuggeſt to yourſelf what they muſt have been. Terror was no inconſiderable ingredient towards rendering the ſituation of my mind ſtill more dreadful; and what motive Mrs. Brumpton could

could poſſibly have had for repreſenting us to others in a light in which I am certain ſhe never could herſelf have regarded us, plunged me into conſternation and affright.

The inſtant Mr. Roatſley and his friend were out of the houſe, I determined to fly from a ſpot in which I dreaded one moment longer to remain; and was haſtening to the door, when it ſuddenly opened, and Mrs. Brumpton appeared, quite out of breath, followed by—the wretch Farnford.

Ten thouſand pardons Madam, cried ſhe, for the trouble you have had in waiting. A poor ſick relation ſent to intreat I would give her the conſolation of one half hour's converſation, having ſome affairs to impart which lay heavy on her mind, and thinking as you mentioned two o'clock that you would not be here for ſome time, I ventured to give my poor dying couſin the comfort ſhe ſo much required.

While

While ſhe pronounced theſe words, in a whining hypocritical tone, Farnford advanced, and making me a profound bow, endeavoured to convey a look of contrition and reverence into his countenance, as if he concluded it muſt at once molify and ſubdue my reſentment: but I entirely diſregarded his ſalutation. The ſight of him ſo unexpectedly threw me into the utmoſt terror, and a crowd of confuſed apprehenſions ruſhed inſtantly on my mind. I exerted myſelf however to aſſume an appearance of unconcerned indifference.

I am ſorry Madam, ſaid I, with an air of gravity and compoſure under which I ſtrove to conceal the fears which almoſt overpowered me, that you ſhould have been ſo unluckily from home, as I have an indiſpenſible engagement that prevents my remaining a moment longer. I ſhall ſettle matters at a more convenient time; at preſent it is impoſſible; and I walked compoſedly

compoſedly towards the door, which ſhe had ſhut.

The woman ſeemed at a loſs, and ſtammered out—'Tis really extremely unlucky indeed Ma'am: but if you could juſt ſit down a little bit Ma'am—perhaps you might find time to give me directions about that large trunk, Ma'am—which has remained in my back room ever ſince you quitted it. Would you chooſe that it ſhould remain in my cuſtody, where it is very ſafe, or ſhall it be ſent to Mrs. Hindon's in the Square Ma'am.

All this time ſhe kept her hand on the lock of the door, as if ſhe intended me the civility of opening it, but evidently with the deſign of detaining me. This movement redoubled my emotions; yet I anſwered as coolly as poſſible—Let it be ſent to Mrs. Hindon's Madam; but I am in extreme haſte, and beg I may not be detained.

For heaven's ſake, cried Farnford, who all

all this while ſtood in evident embarraſſment, his eyes fixed with a moſt impudent ſtare on my face—Spare a few moments I beſeech you from your engagement, and permit an unhappy man, who has undeſignedly and unfortunately offended you, to plead his cauſe at your feet; and falling on his knees, he ſeized my hand, which all my endeavours could not wreſt from him. But indeed I was too much intimidated to dare to make much reſiſtance; for the woman ſtill held the door; and though conſcious that I was in fact a priſoner, I was anxious to keep meaſures with them as long as poſſible, which I imagined might preſerve me from indignity.

Only hear me for one moment, continued he, and you will be conſcious that you have no juſt cauſe for offence. The firſt glance I had of ſuch ſuperlative charms, compleated the conqueſt of my heart: a heart, which has long remained unmoved,

unmoved, unſubdued, by the attractions of the moſt amiable and moſt accompliſhed of your ſex———

Sir, cried I, interrupting him with a reſolution which pride and reſentment inſpired, it is perfectly immaterial to me what are your ſentiments. I am not at leiſure at preſent to liſten to your diſcourſe, and I deſire you would inſtantly releaſe me.

The whole world and all the powers it contains, cried he with frightful vehemence, ſhall not tear you from me till you have heard me out. I own I did you injuſtice. I heartily deplore it. What can I ſay more? What can I do more to teſtify to you the ſincerity of my regret and repentance? Undoubtedly the moſt confounded prudery can alone induce you ſo violently to reſent a freedom of behaviour into which intoxication and a falſe idea of your character inadvertently led me. The moment I diſcovered

vered my error I ſhould have flown to have acknowledged and renounced it at your feet, but you have conſtantly fruſtrated all my attempts to obtain an interview. I am therefore conſtrained to make the moſt of fortune, and ſince ſhe has at length propitiouſly favoured my wiſhes, how can you imagine I will not take advantage of her gifts. Angelic creature, continued he, for heaven's ſake hear me with ſome degree of ſoftneſs and pity. I adore you: I would with delight undergo the ſevereſts torments to gain the ſlighteſt hopes of forgiveneſs. Tell me only that you will forget a conduct which I heartily lament——tell me that you will admit of my viſits at Mrs. Hindon's, where all the family are favourably diſpoſed towards me—and I will torture my own ſoul by permitting you to leave me.

I will not grant a permiſſion, cried I with ſpirit, which would lead to a perſe-

cution

cution I never will undergo and to hopes I never will encourage. You vainly flatter yourſelf, Sir, if you imagine you will even extort ſuch a conſent. I deſire you will allow me to go. I inſiſt upon it. What title have you to preſume to detain me againſt my inclination, (and I ſpoke with undiſſembled heat) you will oblige me to call up my footman for aſſiſtance.

He is not within call, I give you my word, ſo *that* is a reſource to which you cannot apply.

Pray Mrs. Brumpton, cried I to the wicked woman, do you allow of ſuch violence being practiſed in your houſe?

All the Captain aſks is forgiveneſs, Madam, replied ſhe. Were he to attempt any incivility, I ſhould be the firſt to condemn him. I never have countenanced ſuch proceedings in my houſe I aſſure you, Ma'am; but all the gentleman aſks is to be allowed to hope.

All I wiſh by G—, interrupted he,

all

all I kneel for is, that you would forget what has diſpleaſed you in my conduct, and by admitting my viſits, flatter me with the hope that time and aſſiduity may ſoften that dear, that inflexible heart in my favour.

Never, never, cried I with firmneſs.

Never! Madam, anſwered he, ſuddenly throwing aſide that appearance of humility and reſpect which notwithſtanding his violence he had hitherto preſerved, and aſſuming a look that terrified me—Do you perſiſt in this determination? do you tell me *never* to hope for pardon, Madam? Since then I find I gain no ground by ſubmiſſion, ſince you continue thus reſolute and unmoved to all my entreaties, ſince all my proteſtations only feed a pride, ſtern and unrelenting, permit me to aſſure you, that if you do not condeſcend to grant me ſome chance for future favour, moſt certainly I ſhall not prove ſo much my own enemy

enemy as—as to allow you to leave me, ſaid he heſitating—without obtaining it.

What do you aſk, ſaid I, almoſt ſinking with terror from the alarming warmth with which he uttered theſe words, and from the wildneſs of his looks, while he not only graſped my hand but kiſſed it ſeveral times in a paſſionate manner.

I only deſire, replied he, that you will never mention to any perſon whatever this interview, that you will endeavour to forget I ever offended you, and that you will deign to allow of my viſits, nor ſcrupulouſly avoid my ſight, under thoſe falſe pretences of engagements and indiſpoſition which have hitherto baffled all my attempts to meet with you.

Well, Sir, cried I, for my courage had now entirely failed me, ſince you can ſtoop to accept of an extorted compliance, I will ſee you at Mrs. Hindon's when you occaſionally call; but I ſhall certainly keep my own apartment, and follow

follow my own engagements when I ſee proper; nor ſhall I ever give my conſent to conceal any part of your behaviour from thoſe to whom I may chooſe to divulge it, but you may conclude I ſhall not be eager to expoſe it on my own account.

At leaſt promiſe me, ſaid he, promiſe me, lovelieſt of human beings! that you will not publiſh this day's interview either to my mother, to Mrs. Hindon, or to Mr. Howard; on this condition, and this only will I ſuffer my charming priſoner to depart.

You ought to bluſh Sir to call me by that name; but ſince you are determined, to theſe three exceptions I ſhall unwillingly ſubmit. Do not imagine, however, that you have it in your power to intimidate me to grant greater conceſſions; for here I ſolemnly proteſt that nothing ſhall induce me to go further; nor would a generous mind be capable of frighten-

ing

ing me into promiſes which may be above my ability to perform.

No, cried he, I aſk no more. I build my future hopes on the opportunities I ſhall enjoy of pleading my cauſe when you are leſs diſturbed; and I hope you will allow ſomething for the generoſity of my preſent behaviour when you are entirely in my power.

Wretch! where was the generoſity he boaſted of? to intimidate—to terrify me—and to force me into every meaſure he dared wiſh to adopt.

Then let me depart, cried I, for he ſtill held my hand.

Madam, ſaid the woman, may I take the liberty of adding one word? As the part I have acted in this matter was out of pure good will to the Captain, I hope you will not miſinterpret my permitting this meeting, which the young gentleman has ſolicited times without number before I could be brought to conſent to it.

No

No more conditions, ſaid I, with a haughty air; and after Farnford's odious lips had dwelt almoſt a minute on my hand, he led me to my chair, which ſtill remained in waiting though he had uſed the precaution to ſend away Dubois, as if with orders from me to return home.

Do you not think, my Sophia, that during this morning I had ſuffered anguiſh and mortifications ſufficient: ah no, my dear! a more cruel, a more ſevere pang than any I had endured yet remained, and wholly overpowered me: at that painful moment when the horrid Farnford was putting me into my chair at the bottom of the ſtairs, Mr. Roatſley paſſed me. I involuntarily ſtarted on perceiving him, and he ſuddenly changed colour; but without deigning to pay me the uſual compliments, he contented himſelf with ſlightly touching his hat, and with a careleſs but dejected air haſtily paſſing me, walked on.

I fol-

I followed him with my eyes, and obſerved he looked behind; though inſtantly on ſeeing that I remarked it, he turned away, and I thought I could diſtinguiſh an appearance of chagrin on his countenance that made me regard the audacious Farnford (who juſt at that inſtant bad me farewell) with augmented horror and diſguſt.

Oh heavens! ſaid I to myſelf, as the chair moved along, what has this morning revealed to me. That I'm loved by Roatſley, yet am the object of his contempt. If ſome hours ago he ſeemed inclined to think even better of me than I appeared to deſerve, now—now—every unfavourable ſuſpicion muſt have received full confirmation; and the vexation of my heart drew tears of bitterneſs from my eyes. Happily I got unobſerved into my own apartment, where Fanny immediately joined me; and I found ſome ſmall alleviation to my diſtreſs in relating

to her all that variety of ſingular occurrences which had befallen me in the courſe of a few hours; but a call to dinner ſoon obliged me to dry my eyes, and appear with diſſembled eaſe at table, where there were, as uſual, two or three friends beſides the family.

JAN. 21.

Fatigued with writing, I laid down my pen to reflect on the tranſactions of a day, which, were I to live a thouſand years, I ſhall ever remember with pain. Oh! Sophia! have I not cauſe to be wounded to the ſoul. The man on earth who appears the moſt amiable in my eyes, has conceived perhaps an equal partiality for me; yet a falſe and injurious ſuſpicion muſt ſoon, nay muſt already, have entirely obliterated and deſtroyed every favourable prepoſſeſſion,

and ſubſtituted in their room the loweſt and moſt contemptuous ſentiments. Have I not indeed cauſe to be hurt in the tendereſt part. No method can I deviſe for clearing my reputation in Mr. Roatſley's opinion. I am under a fatal promiſe to conceal the whole affair from Mr. Howard, who is the only perſon that could have explained with delicacy and propriety any doubts that were to my diſadvantage, and I have little hopes Roatſley will henceforth feel the ſlighteſt ſolicitude about me, after the flagrant proof he has this day beheld of my deficiency in that point on which he juſtly reſts an importance ſo material. How can I now flatter myſelf, even ſhould I meet him in public, which is my ſole chance of encountering him, that he will give me an opportunity, by converſing with him, to teſtify how ſincerely my ſoul abhors the wretch whoſe conduct merits my ſcorn and deteſtation,

and

and that my mind is far, far above thoſe vile and unaccountable ſuſpicions which he has been led, heaven knows how, to entertain againſt me.

But how on earth, my dear, have reports ſo infamous, ſo inconceivable, been circulated at our expence? who could have any intereſt in propagating them, and who could have been ſo infernally wicked as to invent ſuch injurious falſhoods, without ſome ſtrong and powerful motive? Is it then poſſible to create ſecret and treacherous enemies, without performing or wiſhing ill to any one? The wretch Brumpton, you may perceive, is not alone at the bottom of theſe mortifying aſperſions; from various quarters it ſeems they have reached Mr. Roatſley's ears; even from the lips of his mother he ſays, though heaven is my witneſs I ſcarce knew till this moment that ſhe exiſted; and no ſooner, it is probable, has ſhe been made acquainted with

the ſame fact in regard to us, than a thouſand infamous calumnies have attended the information. A variety of conjectures crowd upon my mind: but the only particular I can reſt on with any degree of conviction, is, that Mr. Howard muſt not have arrived at a period of life enough advanced to allow with propriety of two female companions of our age; and this circumſtance, to ſlanderous diſpoſitions, has moſt undoubtedly given riſe to theſe abominable ſuſpicions, yet how tainted with vice muſt that heart be, who from an accident ſo ſimple and natural, could infer and propagate accuſations ſo ſcandalous. If this is the world, Sophia, ten thouſand times better it had been for us had we never quitted our peaceful ſolitude.

Yeſterday evening, being what Mrs. Hindon calls her aſſembly night, we had a crowd of viſitors, who played at cards or converſed as they were inclined. Moſt of

of them, however, did not remain long enough for either; but, as if ſatisfied with having teſtified their politeneſs by ſhewing themſelves, departed a few minutes after they entered.

Mrs. Hindon, who, to do her juſtice, never fails in attention towards my ſiſter and me, introduced to us a number of her friends; but an introduction in England, ſeldom or never, I find, is productive of an acquaintance; it ſerves merely as a pretext that may be laid hold of at pleaſure for that purpoſe, but which, if diſinclined, obliges the parties only to the formality of a diſtant curtſey on their next meeting; a ceremony that is often dropped on ſucceeding interviews.

You may conclude I was not a little confuſed on hearing Captain Farnford's name announced among the firſt who appeared. He walked directly to the ſopha on which I was ſeated, and very confidentially began to enter into converſa-

tion with me upon general topics with the eaſe and familiarity of the moſt perfect intimacy; but though conſtrained to remain in his company, I thought it by no means neceſſary to puniſh myſelf by attending to his diſcourſe, which ſoon overflowed with the moſt bombaſt and abſurd expreſſions of admiration; I therefore turned from him with unfeigned diſguſt, and addreſſing myſelf to ſome ladies with whom I have contracted a tranſient acquaintance, pretended to be engroſſed with what had ſcarce the power of fixing my wandering thoughts. I found eſcaping from him, however, was quite impracticable, for he followed me for ſome time wherever I went with the moſt obtruſive perſeverance, without ſeeming to remark the repugnance I did not attempt to conceal, nor the contemptuous ſilence with which I liſtened to him.

I flatter myſelf my behaviour at length had

had the deſired effect. He began to look proudly diſpleaſed, and could no longer conceal the painful mortification his vanity ſuffered from the cold neglect I diſcovered to the diſplay of his accompliſhments. Indeed there is a ſecret ſelf-approbation and conceit diffuſed over his manner, which, independent of any other conſideration, would have alone rendered him diſagreeable to me; though I could perceive he was by no means regarded in this unfavourable point of view by the reſt of the company; on the contrary, the younger female part of it ſeemed to conſider him as a real fine gentleman, whoſe notice was ſolicited with an eagerneſs that ſoothed his pride and ſoftened his mortification.

A ſmall party being invited to ſtay ſupper, I was rejoiced to find that during the latter part of the evening he had changed his plan of operations, and inſtead of tormenting me with unceaſing

perſecution, had transferred his attention to a young lady in company, who indeed received it with all the ſatisfaction he could wiſh. He ſeemed to aim at the old attempt of engaging intereſt by exciting jealouſy; from the idea that the ſex cannot with patience ſubmit to the mortification of being rivalled even in the admiration of thoſe for whom they have no value. Heaven grant his ſcheme may continue for ſome time, or rather that it may laſt for ever.

JAN. 22.

How buſy, my Sophia, is our preſent way of life, and how various the ſcenes in which we are engaged. I need now no longer repeat, as I uſed ſo frequently to do, when my journal was dated from our quiet retreat in Languedoc, that it is deficient in intereſt and incident.

More

More events, my beloved friend, but none of a very pleaſing nature.

We have hitherto left the regulation of our finances wholly to Mr. Howard's care; who, more accuſtomed to matters of this kind than it is to be ſuppoſed my ſiſter or I could be, with his uſual goodneſs undertook to manage all our buſineſs of this nature; being in poſſeſſion of a large ſum for preſent uſe, which is not yet exhauſted, and concluding our fortunes ſecure in the funds under the inſpection of Mr. Benſeley's executors, we imagined ourſelves certain of independence.

Mr. Howard has been under ſome apprehenſions, I believe, about this money ever ſince our arrival here, though he forbore alarming us till the truth could be no longer concealed. The ſum is twenty thouſand pounds; all my father ever poſſeſſed; and for which he ſolemnly relinquiſhed all further claims or

expectations from his father's bounty (a precaution I find which was unneceſſary). This Mr. Benſeley had originally placed in the ſtocks; but a few days previous to his demiſe, ſome change in public credit unfortunately induced him to ſell out at a very great price, no doubt with the intention of laying out the money to more advantage. His death, however, unluckily taking place in the interim, no paper can be found by which the real proprietors of that money are aſcertained. A note alone has b n diſcovered, in which Mr. Benſeley acknowledges a debt to my father of four thouſand pounds; and it is but too probable that Fanny and I muſt content ourſelves with this ſmall portion of that affluence of which we always concluded ourſelves ſecure. What is worſe, Mr. Benſeley's affairs are in ſuch embarraſſment and confuſion, that we ſhall not enjoy this little pittance till all is cleared; and as there are a number

number of creditors, it is likely that even this may be conſiderably reduced.

Mr. Howard ſtrives to perſuade us that things may turn out better, and that it is not impoſſible but ſome lights may yet appear to prove our claims. He has conſulted lawyers on the occaſion, but he confeſſes they are not ſanguine, having given it as their opinion that unleſs writings are found which plainly evince our right, a lawſuit would be an expenſive and ineffectual expedient; and it is evident, from the friendly chagrin with which he juſt now divulged this diſagreeable intelligence, that he thinks only part of this debt will be recovered. As to our fortune, that is irretrievably gone.

It has been juſtly obſerved, that the pecuniary diſappointments inflicted by Fortune never produce a laſting or painful wound except to minds tainted with avarice: if we are enabled to live with decency and independence, though with

the

the ſtricteſt œconomy, on what ſtill remains to us, I ſhould bluſh to repine at our loſs, though manifold are the advantages reſulting from affluence, and grateful the pleaſure which diſpenſing it procures to the heart.

If our grandfather ſhould prove inexorable, Sophia, the proſpect now is not a comfortable one: but I will not allow an unneceſſary anxiety about the future to add one moment's uneaſineſs to my preſent vexations: Lord Belmont never can permit us to remain in abſolute poverty: at all events, if we are rejected by him, obſcurity muſt be our portion; and then a little—a very little will enable us to ſubſiſt with comfort and decency.

H. SEYMOUR.

LET-

LETTER XI.

TO MISS BEAUMONT.

JAN. 23.

OH! my Sophia! how infinitely am I ſhocked with a diſcovery I have made.

Yeſterday, when I went to Mrs. Weldon's, I found her alone. Her friend, ſhe told me, had ſent an apology, being a little indiſpoſed; but as you are ſo ſober, ſaid ſhe, I hope you will be almoſt as well pleaſed to ſit and chat *tete à tete* with me, for I expect nobody elſe.

I told her ſhe paid herſelf a bad compliment, if ſhe imagined I did not prefer her company to that of her friends, and that I could not avoid enjoying the lady's detention.

detention. Soon after a hand organ in the ſtreet attracted our attention, and ſeveral well known French opera tunes were played very agreeably by a Savoyard, whoſe wife and child made a rude but not unpleaſant accompanyment upon inſtruments that ſeemed to have been invented in the very infancy of muſic. The effect altogether was delightful; and the ſound of airs which had been taught me in my own country recalling a thouſand ſoft and affecting recollections, conveyed me in imagination to dear Languedoc, and threw me into a reverie that wholly abſorbed me.

An intention of rewarding the performer the more liberally perhaps from conſidering him in ſome meaſure as my countryman, induced me to pull up the ſaſh to throw him ſome money; and juſt at that inſtant I perceived Mr. Roatſley paſs the window. He was walking with another gentleman; but on beholding

me

me ſuddenly ſtarted, and bowing ſlightly, with an air of extreme embarraſſment and confuſion haſtily walked away.

The ſight of him threw me into a perturbation not to be conceived. I felt myſelf colour violently; and was ſcarcely able to ſtand. Mrs. Weldon, who from attentively liſtening to the muſic had not obſerved the gentlemen, though ſhe was ſtanding at the window by me, exclaimed, Good heavens, my dear, what can be the matter? You are all over crimſon. Afraid of her raillery, I choſe not to reveal the real truth, and gave her an evaſive anſwer, expreſſed with ſuch awkwardneſs that it would by no means anſwer the purpoſe intended; but on the contrary, by exciting her curioſity induced her to look out of the window. I knew there muſt be ſomething at the bottom, cried ſhe laughing. Upon my word two very handſome youths, though I can only ſee their backs, for they are almoſt

at

at the end of the ſtreet. However I inſiſt on being informed which of the two it is, the mere ſight of whom has diſcompoſed you ſo prodigiouſly.

After this attack, you may believe I did not chuſe to afford her a ſubject for teizing me by confeſſing the cauſe of my agitation; as I well knew how delighted ſhe always is with a topic on which to diſplay her wit and vivacity. The information that it was Mr. Roatſley was little calculated to make her ſpare me; and beſides of neceſſity muſt have led to a communication which I did not wiſh. I therefore evaded her enquiries in the beſt manner I could contrive, though not without difficulty, under pretence of an indiſpoſition which I knew ſhe did not credit.

Oh! Sophia! the expreſſive manner in which Roatſley regarded me, was ſo ſtriking, that it muſt have made the moſt forcible impreſſion on my mind had I

even

even received no hints to guide me to unravel its meaning; but after the dreadful intelligence which accident has brought to my knowledge, too well, alas! am I enabled to interpret the gravity and melancholy that was ſtrongly pictured in his countenance. But I muſt haſten to other particulars—particulars that have ſhocked me beyond expreſſion.

Juſt as Mrs. Weldon and I had finiſhed a *tete à tete* meal, a thundering rap announced viſitors, and the inſtant after Sir Edward, (for I know not his other name,) entered.

I was ſomewhat diſcompoſed at his appearance, after the freedom of his behaviour the evening I had been in his company; though to do him juſtice, he had treated me with more reſpect than ſeemed to influence the reſt of his companions. I therefore aſſumed a look of grave reſerve, and took no part in a very lively diſcourſe which inſtantly commenced

menced between him and Mrs. Weldon, though they often ſeverally addreſſed themſelves to me, and made many attempts to engage me in it.

After ſitting a quarter of an hour, Mrs. Weldon left the room to bring ſome drawings for the animadverſion of Sir Edward, who profeſſed himſelf a connoiſſeur; and concluding ſhe would immediately return, I kept my ſeat, with the intention of remaining till Mrs. Hindon and Fanny ſhould call for me in their way to an aſſembly, whither I meant to accompany them. But ſcarce was ſhe gone, when Sir Edward advancing, reſumed the ſtile of addreſs with which I had been ſo much importuned the laſt time I had been in his company; and throwing himſelf at my feet, with a profuſion of the moſt extravagant compliments ſwore he had adored me ever ſince he had enjoyed the happineſs of ſeeing me, and that he had been the moſt miſerable

ſerable of men, and muſt remain ſo, unleſs I would diſcard the cold and cruel reſerve with which I received all his attentions.

I was petrified with aſtoniſhment; and riſing in order to leave him, aſſured him I never diſcovered either diſtance or repugnance, but in company which naturally inſpired thoſe feelings.

Lovelieſt of women! cried he, wherein can I have been ſo wretched as to diſpleaſe you? How can I have inadvertently fallen into an error which is the fault on earth I ſhould moſt deplore, and which were it neceſſary I would expiate with my life. Do not imagine, all divine as you are, that your charms can be heightened or your beauty rendered more irreſiſtible from that air of haughtineſs and diſdain, which would deſtroy the power of any features but your own, nor conclude that you will augment the number of your ſlaves from the ſeverity and

cruelty

cruelty of the chains with which you muſt bind all hearts that behold you.

Sir, cried I, confounded at this ſpeech, and a great many others in the ſame ſtrain which ſucceeded, and ſtill more by the manner in which they were pronounced, while he ſtood between me and the door with the intention of preventing me from eſcaping—for heaven's ſake allow me to depart. I flattered myſelf the diſappro. bation I teſtified ſo lately at a ſimilar behaviour, would have entirely put an end to compliments and a converſation which confounds and bewilders me; and I alſo hoped that the regret you expreſſed for having alarmed and ſhocked me, would not have been ſo ſoon followed by the ſame inhumanity. I thought myſelf under obligations to you then Sir, for relieving me from another gentleman's perſecution; let me, I entreat you, have reaſon to expreſs my thanks once more for delivering me from your own.

The

The earneſtneſs with which I uttered theſe words ſeemed to ſtrike him; yet for ſome time he went on in the ſame incomprehenſible ſtile, till at length I exclaimed—What on earth Sir does all this mean? I am perplexed and bewildered. I know not what to make of your diſcourſe.

Madam, ſaid he, with an evident change in his countenance and ſome heſitation, my converſation cannot have confounded and bewildered you more than yours aſtoniſhes me. If ſuch are your real ſentiments, why do I behold you here?

At this queſtion, pronounced ſo ſeriouſly, I felt as if I was thunderſtruck. A thouſand ſuſpicions, confuſed and terrifying, ruſhed upon my mind.

Tell me, cried I with terror, tell me why I ought not to be here.

Miſs Seymour, anſwered he with encreaſing earneſtneſs, I bluſh for myſelf.

I perceive

I perceive I have been egregiouſly deceived, and my confuſion deprives me of power to apologize for my behaviour. All that I now can do to atone for my offence is, to inform you that this houſe is by no means a proper place, nor is its owner a ſafe companion, for a young lady of your appearance.

My God! exclaimed I in horror, for at that inſtant he who had been but a moment before the object of my diſlike and apprehenſion, ſeemed now my ſole dependance and only ſecurity from inſult and deſpair—My God! what ſhall I do?

Be not alarmed I beſeech you, cried he, and be aſſured that as certainly as I have warned you of your danger I ſhall myſelf ſecure you from it. You have nothing to fear.

I was very near fainting, from the ſhock of this dreadful information; and anxious as was my deſire of quitting inſtantly the houſe, I had not power to move.

move. At laſt, when I had a little recovered myſelf, I entreated Sir Edward to order a chair. He inſtantly complied; and having pulled the bell, deſired the footman to make haſte.

The ſhort interval which paſſed till the chair was ready, was the moſt awkward that can be imagined. My unſpeakable impatience rendered it an age; and to my agitation and terror was ſuperadded the moſt painful confuſion. I could hardly look Sir Edward in the face after the explanation he had made of my ſituation, and he himſelf ſeemed equally at a loſs. My diſtreſs was not, you may conceive, much abated, by an expreſſion which inadvertently dropt from him upon my confeſſing my apprehenſions for Mrs. Weldon's return before I had left the houſe. Be aſſured Madam, ſaid he, ſhe will take particular care not to interrupt us. This ſpeech at once finiſhed her character and informed me that ſhe had planned

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planned the interview; in procuring which ſhe probably purſued her own intereſt.

Good heavens, Sophia, is it poſſible that this woman, to whom nature has been ſo bountiful, ſo prodigal of her gifts; who poſſeſſes ſo abundantly the inſinuating power of pleaſing and whoſe converſation is in general as refinedly delicate as it is judicious and agreeable—is it poſſible that ſhe is the moſt infamous and abandoned of her ſex: ſhe who enjoys the talent of engaging admiration and affection almoſt in the very moment that her conduct cannot but excite diſapprobation? Good heavens! into what a gulph of miſery might I not have been plunged, had not the hand of Providence been held forth to extricate me from the labyrinth of deſtruction in which I had been entangled.

The inſtant the chair arrived, Sir Edward ſupported me into it, for I could ſcarce

ſcarce move; having firſt procured me a glaſs of water, which my impatience ſuffered me only juſt to put to my lips. Having no attendant, Sir Edward was ſo obliging as to walk by the ſide of the chair to ſee me ſafe home; where I found Mrs. Hindon and Fanny dreſt for their viſit; but perceiving me ſo ill and diſordered, I could prevail with neither to fulfil their intention, my ſiſter poſitively refuſing to leave me, and Mrs. Hindon imagining herſelf obliged in politeneſs to appear equally anxious.

As that lady's love of talking renders her often imprudently communicative, I did not chooſe to confeſs the private cauſe of my indiſpoſition, but retiring to my apartment, poured out the fulneſs of my heart to my dear Fanny, who lifted up her hands and eyes to heaven in aſtoniſhment that ſuch a character exiſted on earth.

When I recall to mind the addreſs with

which Mrs. Weldon contrived to impoſe upon me, and the ingenious methods by which ſhe inſpired me with the beſt opinion of her heart, I am loſt in aſtoniſhment and horror to think that ſuch a character lives. Here then is the infamous and ſecret cauſe brought to light of that warm attachment which ſhe teſtified with ſo much fervour to us both, but chiefly to me, and which ſtole ſo imperceptibly upon my affections, that ſhe was every day gaining ground in our eſteem, in ſpite of ſeveral little improprieties of behaviour, that ſerved however only as foils to her other good qualities, and to which ſhe poſſeſſed the art of giving what turn ſhe pleaſed. Under pretence of buſineſs, I now recollect ſhe never would conſent to viſit at Mr. Hindon's, though I carried repeated meſſages from his lady aſſuring her ſhe ſhould be happy to ſee any of our friends, that morning excepted when ſhe ventured to call for the purpoſe

purpoſe of ſoliciting my forgiveneſs in order to further the barbarous purpoſe of engaging me to meet Sir Edward. He no doubt had bribed her to his purpoſe. Let me not blame him however, whatever were the ſteps he took to obtain the interview, ſince the artfu woman no doubt repreſented me to him in a falſe point of view, and the delicacy of his behaviour on this occaſion has laid me under obligations to him which I can never recall without gratitude. So ſacred muſt I hold the fame of a woman, however infamous, whom I once called my friend, that I will not confeſs even to Mr. Howard what dupes we have been to her artifice and duplicity. As for Mrs. Hindon, my terror and eſcape would to her appear juſt the counterpart of the good ſtory of my alarm before, and would I make no doubt prove equally the ſubject of her mirth and diverſion. I therefore reſolved to ſay nothing of an event

which has ſhocked me ſeverely, farther than to acknowledge that ſome reports of her conduct have reached my ears which have induced me no longer to continue our intimacy.

Poor Madame de Clarence! Much, much, I fear, ſhe has had ſufficient reaſon for her jealouſy; and I accuſe myſelf moſt ſeverely for having given credit to the vile ridicule thrown on her by Mrs. Weldon.

I ſlept little all night; and to-day I really feel more uncomfortable than can be conceived. I have not only loſt a friend and an agreeable companion, which of itſelf in our ſituation is irreparable, but I have found her to be criminal and unworthy. I fear I ſhall grow ſuſpicious in future; for never could I have been more compleatly deceived than with regard to Mrs. Weldon, whoſe greateſt fault I imagined conſiſted in a love of admiration and a paſſion for coquetry,

quetry, which is ſaid in ſome degree to pervade the whole ſex, and often ſubſiſts in the moſt innocent hearts.

But oh! can you gueſs the circumſtance which of all others tortures me the moſt painfully, and dwells perpetually in my thoughts? What muſt Mr. Roatſley's ideas have been, how muſt his ſuſpicions have received confirmation, from beholding me ſtanding with a woman of this character, at the window of her reſidence. No wonder that he ſtarted and changed colour. No doubt he had heard of her before; and I can now partly trace the cauſe of thoſe calumnies, to account for which puzzled and perplexed me ſo extremely. Our intimacy with Mrs. Weldon muſt have been the origin of all the defamatory reports that have reached his ears. But oh! Sophia! how will he be undeceived—and when? Is there any thing ſo tender, ſo delicate, ſo irretrievable, as the reputation of a young woman?

and when once wounded in the ſlighteſt manner, however injudiciouſly and unjuſtly, how difficult does it prove wholly to obliterate the ſtain and to efface the falſe impreſſion. This dreadful reflection hurts me to the ſoul, and for ſome time was quite intolerable. But a few hours conſideration have abated in ſome meaſure its acute force; and I have been calling up the aſſiſtance of conſcious innocence and dignity to my aſſiſtance, which tells me it is weakneſs to allow calumny to poiſon that repoſe which has never been embittered from vice.

Mrs. Hindon inſiſts on our attending her this evening to the Opera, an entertainment at which we have not yet been preſent; for as I agree with Lady Linroſe in opinion that till we are properly introduced we ought not often to appear in public, I have hitherto reſiſted all her intreaties, though it is the amuſement, if of any, from which I promiſe myſelf moſt

moſt pleaſure. You may believe I was never leſs diſpoſed for being entertained than at this moment. Indeed the utmoſt gratification I could receive, would be to indulge my ſerious humour at home. But for that very reaſon I have forced myſelf to conſent to go. It is a duty I think to be chearful when one is unconſcious of meriting ſelf-reproach, and can raiſe our hearts in gratitude to heaven that no viſible calamity hangs over us.

FOUR O'CLOCK.

About an hour ago, while I was engaged writing in my dreſſing room, I was informed by Thereſe that Sir Edward Sudbury was below, and requeſted the honour of ſeeing me if not particularly engaged; and on entering the parlour, I perceived my new acquaintance, who politely apologized for the liberty he had

taken of enquiring after my health; but the ſituation in which I left you laſt night, Madam, ſaid he, gave me ſo much uneaſineſs, that my deſire of making perſonal enquiries was not to be reſiſted.

I found myſelf at firſt a little embarraſſed; but ſummoned courage to tell him that his viſit required no ſort of apology, as I ſhould ever regard myſelf as particularly indebted to him for an explanation which might not otherwiſe for ſome time have reached my ears. This ſpeech, ſhort as it was, alluded to recollections which wounded me ſo ſeverely, that my cheeks were dyed with bluſhes; and I heſitated more than once before I came to the concluſion. Sir Edward himſelf ſeemed almoſt in equal confuſion; and his manner appeared ſo modeſt, mild, and reſpectful, that I could ſcarce recognize him for the man who had joined with his riotous companions in giving me ſuch pain and mortification. But large allowances

allowances ought certainly to be made for his behaviour where his freedom was neither ſuſpected to occaſion pain nor apprehended to be conſidered as an inſult.

JAN. 24.

Yeſterday evening we accompanied Mrs. Hindon to the Opera, the amuſement of all others the moſt ſuited to my taſte; indeed in the ſtate my ſpirits then were, it was the only one for which I could have felt the ſlighteſt reliſh. A faint hope which I had entertained, that chance might carry Roatſley there alſo, conquered my reluctance at going, and ſupported me with courage and ſpirits for the exertion.

The inſtant I was ſeated, I caſt my eyes around the houſe in hopes of ſeeing him, though I well knew the confuſion the ſight of him muſt have given me, but

without ſucceſs, for he was no where to be found.

Sunk and diſappointed, I tried to attend to the muſic; and endeavoured to forget my dejection by participating in the general gaiety that ſat on every countenance but mine. My attempts were however fruitleſs. The ſongs, which in private uſed to charm me, now, though improved to the higheſt pitch of perfection by the moſt admirable vocal performers and the moſt excellent accompanyment, could not even fix my wandering attention; and Mrs. Hindon's remarks, by interrupting a train of ideas that abſorbed me, proved extremely fatigueing. Her inceſſant talking, poor woman, indeed almoſt exhauſted me, and I felt as a ſevere taſk the ſhare I was conſtrained to take in a converſation ſo little intereſting. Oh! how painful it is, Sophia, to cover a heavy heart under the maſk of chearfulneſs.

Melico

Melico had at length began one of his moſt melting ſongs; and it accorded ſo well "with my ſoul's ſadneſs" at that moment, that not only my attention was unavoidably engaged, but my inquietude ſoothed and lulled into compoſure. At this moment I accidentally diſcovered the face I had ſo anxiouſly ſought in one of the ſide boxes, not very far diſtant from that part of the pit where I was placed. I felt my face glow and my heart beat with great violence. He did not however obſerve me; but ſtood behind a young lady, who was indeed uncommonly beautiful, and with whom he converſed with infinite eagerneſs and animation. I thought I could perceive that their diſcourſe was equally intereſting to both. They ſmiled delighted to each other, at particular paſſages of the ſong that ſeemed to enchant them, and though ſurrounded by ſeveral perſons of both

ſexes,

ſexes, appeared wholly engroſſed with each other.

At laſt, however, he looked round; and on diſcovering us bowed with politeneſs, which inſtantly carried the eyes of the young lady towards our party; and the moment after I ſaw that ſhe was enquiring of him who we were. The ideas which this little circumſtance produced, and my conjectures what anſwer he could give to her interrogatories, added to my pain and confuſion. Soon after I obſerved that he had quitted her; and while I was watching with anxiety to find in what part of the houſe he meant to place himſelf, gueſs my perturbation on finding that he had actually ſeated himſelf on the bench immediately behind me, where there happened to be a ſpare place. His face was overſpread with a deep colour while he paid me his compliments; and there was an air of gravity and penetration in his countenance, as if he ſought

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in mine the refutation or confirmation of his doubts, while this ſuſpicion mortified and wounded me ſo cruelly, that I was apprehenſive of raiſing the ſame commotion I had done at the play.

He perceived I looked diſturbed; and attributing it to the extreme heat, enquired with ſuch evident ſoftneſs if I was not ill, that the tender and unexpected anxiety he manifeſted on this occaſion gave an inſtant revival to my ſpirits.

He then regretted his bad fortune, he ſaid, in having ſo unluckily miſſed ſeeing us when he had called at Mr. Hindon's both that day and the evening before; this, through the negligence of that gentleman's ſervants, had never come to our knowledge; and oh! what uneaſineſs would it not have ſpared me to have known that Mr. Roatſley had taken this ſtep towards having his unjuſt ſurmiſes confuted. I aſſured him the favour he had done us had been entirely unknown

to

to Mr. Howard, who undoubtedly would have immediately acknowledged his attention. He then began to talk of our accidental rencontre in the packet boat, and paid me a number of unmerited compliments on the compoſure of my behaviour; for although I did not, like my poor Fanny, allow my terrors to diſtract me, I was very far from deſerving the encomiums he laviſhed on me. Pray my Sophia does not his exaggerations on this occaſion betray—— But I ſee you ſmile. I will however be perfectly unreſerved.—Does it not manifeſt ſomething like partiality? and may I not draw this inference from it, that he will be open to conviction. Of this I may ſurely be confident; that although to the eye of a man ſo penetrating, ſo intelligent as Roatſley, many errors and defects in my manner and converſation muſt be apparent, new as I am to the world and ignorant of its forms and etiquettes, yet no real impropriety,

propriety, nothing below the dignity of the female character, can poſſibly be diſcovered by a candid and well diſpoſed mind; and this little pride, my dear, enabled me, after my firſt flutters were over, to acquit myſelf during the remainder of the evening with tolerable eaſe. Supported by conſcious rectitude, I determined not to yield to the baſhfulneſs and conſtraint which were ſtealing upon me; but in juſtice to my own character to ſhew myſelf to him ſuch as I really was, and leave him to repent and bluſh for the injury he had done me.

He often recurred to the accident that had produced our acquaintance, and called it the moſt fortunate of his life. The moſt fortunate of your life, cried Fanny, who is extremely literal: that is ſtrange indeed. Sure there can be no ſort of pleaſure in being frightened out of one's wits, and very near being drowned into

the

the bargain? for my own part I never reflect on it without horror.

This return to his compliment, uttered with ſuch *naiveté*, made him ſmile. Nay, ſaid ſhe, the ſtorm was ſo violent that I think the moſt courageous of men needed not have bluſhed to have owned themſelves terrified.

Had I been in danger of loſing my courage on that occaſion, ſaid he, Miſs Seymour would have taught me my duty.

Mr. Howard at this moment joined us. Mr. Roatſley and he ſeemed mutually pleaſed at meeting; and ſoon after the latter whiſpered that Lady Linroſe was in the houſe, and pointed her out to us in the box which Roatſley had juſt quitted.

Our curioſity to ſee her was inexpreſſible: ſhe ſeems under fifty, and poſſeſſes an air of majeſtic dignity in her appearance, blended however with a cold ſeverity of aſpect that deſtroys the admira-

tion

tion her figure excites, and renders her countenance harſh and unamiable. It is indeed wholly devoid of that affability of expreſſion which denotes a diſpoſition to be pleaſed, and which ever confers pleaſure on the beholder. The inſtant I had ſtudied her features, I could not perſuade myſelf I ſhould ever recognize either the kind relation or tender friend in Lady Linroſe.

From having obſerved Mr. Roatſley of her party, I naturally conjectured he muſt be of her acquaintance, and began to flatter myſelf that through this unexpected channel of intelligence I might be able to learn ſome particulars relating to a family, with whom, in ſpite of our preſent prepoſſeſſions, we may one day become as intimately connected by affection as we are at preſent from conſanguinity. I therefore demanded if he was acquainted with that lady in black, pointing

ing to the part of the houſe where ſhe was placed.

What lady pray? ſaid he.

That lady, cried Fanny: ſhe who ſits to the right in the box you were juſt now ſeated in. Don't you think ſhe is the moſt ſevere, diſagreeable-looking woman you ever beheld.

What lady do you talk of? repeated he, aſtoniſhed no doubt at Fanny's inconſiderate warmth of expreſſion.

Lady Linroſe, returned ſhe. You have been of her party all this time. Sure you muſt know her?

As Mr. Roatſley was ſilent, and did not ſeem inclined to give the ſlighteſt encouragement to Fanny's thoughtleſs imprudence, who, unacquainted with the etiquette of ſociety, perpetually diſregards the little artifices which common politeneſs demands, and never once conſidered that Lady Linroſe might be, for any thing ſhe knew, one of the moſt intimate

mate of his friends, I endeavoured to check her from proceeding farther, but in vain. Lord, continued ſhe, inattentive to the coldneſs with which he liſtened to her remarks, don't you think ſhe looks croſs and ill-natured? I have not once obſerved her ſmile or look pleaſed all the while I have been watching her countenance: beſides Hermione, turning to me, is it not very ſtrange for a widow to make a public appearance ſo early. I thought nobody had done ſo in England till at leaſt ſix months after their huſband's deceaſe; did not Mrs. Hindon ſay ſo the other evening, when we were on this ſubject? Oh! but I had forgot that they did not live together, and my Lord was ſo ill-humoured, I ſuppoſe, her Ladyſhip conſidered him as no great loſs, though I think ſhe might have ſhewn a little more regard to his memory though only for the ſake of decency.

I tried by a look to ſtop her volubility: though

though in fact my own ſentiments of her Ladyſhip's conduct in this laſt inſtance were ſimilar to my ſiſter's. Her *prudence* has not impreſſed us, you may believe, with the moſt favourable opinion of her *heart*; and this procedure, which I am told is unuſual, was not calculated for improving it.

Mr. Roatſley's gravity deterred me, however, from avowing my ſecret thoughts. Pray, ſaid he to Fanny, after a ſhort pauſe, with a half ſmile—has Lady Linroſe the honour of your acquaintance?

Oh! Lord! no, cried ſhe, without conſidering how unaccountable this violent prepoſſeſſion againſt an utter ſtranger muſt appear, I never beheld her in my life till this moment.

Then how, pray, has ſhe been ſo unlucky as to fall under your diſpleaſure.

My diſpleaſure! cried ſhe, embarraſſed; oh not at all. I merely diſlike her

her appearance. She looks ſulky and proud, and I hate thoſe ſort of people.

She is very unfortunate indeed, returned he. I then contrived to put a period to the ſubject by calling Fanny's attention to another object; for I dreaded the ſuſpicion and curioſity her ſimplicity might excite in Mr. Roatſley, who ſeemed both amuſed and aſtoniſhed at her converſation.

Not for a moment during the remainder of the evening did he leave us; and by the vivacity of his diſcourſe, and the amiable gentleneſs of his manner, he inſenſibly reſtored my tranquillity, diſſipated my confuſion, and inſpired me with a flow of ſpirits almoſt equal to what appears natural to himſelf.

When all was concluded, he attended us to Mrs. Hindon's carriage; and requeſted leave, in polite terms, to indemnify himſelf, he ſaid, for his late diſappointment by waiting on us again.

I have

I have not ſpent an evening ſo agreeably ſince that we paſſed at Dover. Indeed I even give laſt night greatly the preference, it having all the advantages of a moſt painful contraſt to enhance its value. My ſufferings in the early part of the evening conferred a double reliſh on the ſatisfaction of the ſucceeding.

I feel myſelf now relieved from a load of uneaſineſs which I ſupported with much anxiety; for I am convinced from Roatſley's behaviour laſt night, nay from the very expreſſion of his countenance, that we are completely juſtified in his opinion, at leaſt with regard to the vile aſperſions ſo cruelly circulated againſt us.

Sir Edward Sudbury, who did not obſerve us till near the concluſion of the laſt dance, joined us before we left the houſe, and requeſted me to introduce him to Mrs. Hindon; which, as I wiſhed that lady to remain ignorant of the circumſtances of our acquaintance, was rather

ther diſagreeable to me; however I had no choice, and fortunately contrived to evade her enquiries by informing her of my own accord that I had been in company with him at Mrs. Weldon's.

We are beginning to grow extremely impatient for diſpatches from Nice. Mr. Howard tells us that by courſe of poſt we ought to have received letters before this time; and ſurely on this ſubject little time for conſideration is required. Why then does Lord Belmont retain us in ſuſpence.

JAN. 25.

Mrs. Hindon being rather indiſpoſed to-day, ſhe kept her room all the morning, and taking my work, I went to ſit with her, Fanny having gone to call upon Lady Farnford, whoſe repeated civilities

vilities demanded or rather extort ſome return on our part.

Mrs. Hindon was very preſſing with me to accompany her; but you may believe her entreaties had no ſort of effect: as the ſight of Captain Farnford was abſolutely diſagreeable to me, it would be ſtrange indeed, I ſaid, if I threw myſelf in his way when it was in my power ſo eaſily to avoid it.

This viſit naturally led the ſubject to that family, upon which Mrs. Hindon began to laviſh a thouſand encomiums. Lady Farnford is her relation; and there has ever ſubſiſted between them from infancy a very intimate friendſhip. They are extremely oppoſite in point of appearance; Lady Farnford being a little lean figure, with a very cold and dry addreſs; but they are both equally prying and inquiſitive, which is I ſuppoſe their chief bond of union, though Lady Farnford does not talk ſo much in a week as her friend does in one day.

Captain

Captain Farnford, Mrs. Hindon ſaid, had always been reckoned a young man of very ſhining parts, and his figure and addreſs were ſingularly elegant. He was a little wild to be ſure; but what of that? few young ladies regarded that error as a material fault at his time of life, and in him it ſeemed more the effects of life and gaiety than of any inclination to vice. Some people, it was true, thought him a little extravagant; but this was the foible of a generous mind. For her part, to ſee a young man too *near*, was of all things what moſt diſguſted her; beſides, continued ſhe, as he is not yet burthened with a wife and family, no doubt he has not turned his mind towards œconomy; but when he is once fairly ſettled, I'll anſwer for it it will be the ſtudy of his life in all reſpects to render the woman of his choice compleatly happy.

I began now to ſuſpect to what all this tended. I tried, however, to ward off

an explanation, by coldly acquieſcing in her ſentiments as a perſon unintereſted in the cauſe; but my plan would not ſucceed.

I am glad you think ſo, Miſs Seymour, cried ſhe, for indeed, to tell you the real truth of the matter, the poor Captain is quite in deſpair at your diſtant and frigid manner towards him; and my Lady, whoſe heart is wrapt up in her ſon's happineſs, and who herſelf admires you above all women, deſires nothing on earth ſo fervently as that he may render himſelf acceptable to you. Many a good match has been propoſed to Captain Farnford, I aſſure you; but till he ſaw you he hated the very idea of matrimony, to which now he annexes every hope of happineſs.

I am extremely ſorry Madam, anſwered I, to receive this information. I flattered myſelf my behaviour had ſufficiently explained to Captain Farnford that my

my ſentiments were fixed and immoveable on this head, and I imagined, if he ſtill deceived himſelf, you was able to have convinced him how little ſucceſsful this application could ever be. If however you Madam have been commiſſioned to talk with me on the ſubject, I entreat you will no longer delay acquainting him at once from me, that there is not the ſlighteſt chance—there is not even a poſſibility of my altering my reſolution. I hope you will excuſe me when I acknowledge, added I, that there is hardly any propoſal could be made to me at which I ſhould feel a more invincible repugnance, and I earneſtly beg you will mention a ſubject no more which is diſagreeable to me even to think of.

Poh, poh, Miſs Seymour; upon my word you are abſolutely cruel. However I aſſure you I won't carry this meſſage, which I know would be a death warrant to the Captain's hopes. I have known

many a young lady change her mind after declaring herſelf ten times more violently determined than you are, and I hope to ſee you alter your reſolution one day in his favour. Indeed if you perſiſt in precluding him from all chance of ſeeing you, how can the young man find opportunity to plead his cauſe. I really think I muſt aſſiſt him. I aſſure you he importunes me inceſſantly for only ten minutes converſation with you, as if it was more than life to him, and though your heart is hardened, mine is quite melted at his ſufferings.

If ten minutes converſation would rid me of his ſolicitations for ever, ſaid I, I would certainly puniſh myſelf ſo far as to give him that ſatisfaction; but as I have reaſon to imagine it would rather feed than extinguiſh his hopes, I think it would be as unfair to him as painful to myſelf.

Nay but till you bid him deſpair your-

ſelf,

ſelf, you may be convinced what I ſay will have little effect; and I hope when you ſee ſo fine a young man at your feet, you will find yourſelf ſoftened in his favour in ſpite of your preſent oppoſition.

I aſſured her again and again that my diſlike and prepoſſeſſion againſt him were inſurmountable; but ſhe went on without the ſlighteſt regard to all I ſaid, repeating that when we met, I ſhould not be able to adhere to my inflexibility.

The return of Fanny relieved me from this fatiguing converſation. Lady Farnford had loaded her with civilities, and almoſt forced her to promiſe to go back to dinner: Miſs Farnford, on her part, was equally kind, and indeed ſeems reſolved to become Fanny's intimate friend, without any ſort of interchange of affections between them; taking every opportunity of getting her aſide; and quite unſolicited, with the communicative imprudence of a boarding ſchool girl, mak-

ing her the confidant of a thouſand little trifling love affairs, or, as ſhe terms them, *flirtations*. The equality of their ages, and the flattery which Miſs Farnford ſo laviſhly employs to gain Fanny's confidence, have cemented a ſort of intimacy between them, though they are too diſſimilar in diſpoſition even to receive any real gratification from the ſociety of each other.

In the evening Mrs. Hindon being almoſt well, and able to walk into the drawing room, one or two of her female friends came in, and were prevailed with to remain to make up a party at whiſt. Fanny having got half through a favourite novel, took this opportunity of ſlipping up ſtairs to finiſh it; and as I was opening my work box to take out my netting, Mr. Howard drew me aſide from the company. I have got ſomething to ſay to you, Miſs Seymour, ſaid he, and placed himſelf by me on the ſopha.

You

You muſt know, proceeded he, that your acquaintance Mr. Roatſley, (I coloured at the name) told me laſt night at the opera that if I was at leiſure this morning he would call about twelve, as he wiſhed extremely to have a few minutes converſation with me in private, and this day he kept his appointment.

Oh Sophia! how your Hermione's heart beat at this information, Mr. Howard too looked earneſt and grave. The lights however were at ſome diſtance, and I hope my confuſion was unobſerved.

Mr. Roatſley, continued Mr. Howard, with the politeneſs natural to him apologized with ſome little embarraſſment for the liberty he ſaid he was about to take.

Do you think, Sophia, that I was not embarraſſed at this preamble. Indeed I dare not acknowledge even to myſelf what abſurd notions were at that inſtant crouding into my thoughts.

Mr. Howard went on. He then explained to me, ſaid he, a very intricate ſeries of iniquity, with which I would not ſhock your ears, did I not conceive it as abſolutely neceſſary to put you on your guard.

Good heavens, cried I, what are you going to tell me?

You have no reaſon thank God, anſwered he, to ſuffer now any apprehenſions, as the danger is at an end; but I cannot call to mind that my own imprudence was the original cauſe of the injurious reports, without the utmoſt ſelf-reproach. I think no man can be more ſenſible than myſelf of the value and importance of my charge, yet I own I committed the moſt unpardonable overſight in allowing you and your ſiſter to remain for a week under the roof of a woman of whoſe character I was not perfectly informed.

Her appearance indeed was ſo plauſible, and your ſtay to be ſo ſhort, that I took

took it on truſt, nor once harboured a ſuſpicion of her being what ſhe has proved—one of the moſt abandoned and profligate of her ſex: a wretch entirely diveſted of honour and conſcience, who has had the audacity and wickedneſs to traffic with your reputation, and who perceiving you had kindled the preſumptuous wiſhes of a libertine, dared to repreſent you to him in the moſt doubtful, nay in the moſt infamous light, in order, by flattering his licentious hopes, to reap the lucrative fruits of his folly and prodigality.

Oh! my dear Sir, interrupted I in a tone of impatient vexation, let us return to ſolitude and obſcurity, where, though liſtleſneſs may intrude and languor invade our quiet, danger and mortification never can moleſt us. How unjuſt have I not been to the cautious experience of my dear father, in ſometimes ſuſpecting he had repreſented the world and its falla-

cious charms through that medium with which calamity and diſappointment ever inveſt the face of nature. I am now fatally convinced that the pleaſures of ſociety fade and diſappear when oppoſed to the ſnares, anxieties, and diſguſts, which ſour and taint all its enjoyments.

You are too young, and much too amiable, returned Mr. Howard, ſmiling at my impetuoſity, to become a cynic ſo early upon thoſe whom nature has formed to adorn ſociety as well as to improve it. The world has powerful claims; and Miſs Seymour muſt not talk of diſguſt becauſe a temporary mortification obſcures for a moment the many rational enjoyments which it offers to every well-regulated mind. But you muſt allow me to go on with my ſtory.

Mr. Roatſley, after expreſſing himſelf in the warmeſt and moſt reſpectful terms of both the amiable ſiſters, confeſſed that he had been infinitely ſhocked and aſtoniſhed

niſhed to learn, immediately almoſt on his arrival in town, that they were regarded in a very injurious light by his friend Captain Bradſhaw, who from reſiding under the ſame roof had apparently acceſs to proper information, and had received *his* from the woman of the houſe.

Mr. Roatſley confidently aſſerted the falſhood of theſe defamatory ſuſpicions, and requeſted his friend to be more particular in his enquiries, and to talk again with the landlady, who when interrogated ſtill continued to inſinuate that you were not altogether what you appeared. Mr. Roatſley however was not ſo weak as to allow his judgment to be biaſſed by this report, nor was he lead for a moment to do you injuſtice, although he found that rumours to your diſadvantage were preſſed on him from more quarters than one; all originating no doubt from the ſame ſource; till one evening at the play, when he confeſſed——

Oh!

Oh! repeat it not to me, dear Sir, cried I; I know too well that it was quite natural for him to think me light, thoughtleſs, and imprudent, when he beheld me at Drury lane attended by the wretch, whom I then found out to be Captain Farnford, and to all appearance voluntarily receiving his attentions: an accident which my indiſpoſition alone occaſioned; for you may believe no inducement on earth, had I been in a ſituation to have repulſed him, ſhould have forced me to have granted him the ſhadow of my notice.

Well, Miſs Seymour, thoughtleſs and imprudent I really believe he might conclude you to be, nor could he poſſibly think otherwiſe, ignorant as he was of the circumſtances that produced Farnford's attendance, and conſcious of the juſt cauſe he had given you for repugnance and diſdain. He ſaw you together in the ſame party, and it ſeems ſupported by him when

when you left the box. He could not but imagine you had permitted all this, and of courſe muſt have ſuppoſed your reſentment neither ſo laſting nor ſo ſevere as in ſtrict delicacy he thought it ought to have been. Yet Mr. Roatſley ſolemnly ſwore, that to the diſadvantage of your reputation a doubt or ſuſpicion never once found place in his breaſt; and tho' wholly ignorant myſelf of the circumſtances of the fact, I eaſily convinced him that in a point of delicacy Miſs Seymour could not poſſibly be found in the ſlighteſt degree deficient.

That intereſt, however, which youth and beauty ſeldom fail to excite in the heart of a young man, (a ſentiment, added he with a half ſmile, which Mr. Roatſley ſeems formed to feel with enthuſiaſtic force) made him undergo no little diſappointment I conjecture in perceiving you had ſo ill anſwered the expectation to which your acquaintance, intereſting

reſting tho' ſhort, had given birth; for he confeſſed that he had been indefatigable in his enquiries about you, tho' very fruitleſs you may believe they muſt have proved; and tho' I underſtood the hint in this avowal; I did not think myſelf at liberty to ſatisfy his curioſity, and therefore let it paſs unnoticed.

He owns, however, that theſe unjuſt ſurmizes received ſome degree of credibility from meeting you a few days after, accompanied by this ſame audacious young man, who put you into a chair, unattended by your ſervant, at the door of your former lodgings; but this part of his information I perſiſted in averring was impoſſible, and that he muſt have miſtaken ſome other perſon for you.

Oh it was me indeed, cried I, and the rencontre you may be certain gave me equal pain and terror: nor ſhould I have concealed it for a moment, had not the wretch extorted a promiſe which fear alone

alone perſuaded me to grant him never to divulge it to you.

Good heaven! how did the ſcoundrel contrive to meet with you?

Through the connivance of that wicked woman, ſaid I. But as my promiſe, tho' conſtrained, remains ſtill in force, except as to that part of it which chance has informed you, I am not at liberty to give you the particulars, neither are they at all neceſſary; ſince I hope in God, as the wretch is quite undeceived in regard to my character, I have nothing now to alarm me except the perſecution of ſolicitation, which I hope by ſedulouſly avoiding him to eſcape.

Mr. Howard's mild countenance reddened with indignation at this account, which quickly infuſed an apprehenſion into my mind, that under the character of our guardian he might think it neceſſary to reſent my affronts. The inſtant this idea ſtruck me, I ſoftened as much

as

as poſſible what I had juſt been acknowledging, and aſſured him that during our laſt interview Farnford had appeared ſo much piqued and offended at my unconquerable reſerve, that I had reaſon to flatter myſelf I ſhould be tormented by him no more; and added, that when I was entirely in his power, all he had aſked was forgiveneſs, and permiſſion to viſit me, having repeatedly ſworn that an injurious ſuſpicion of my character had alone given riſe to a conduct which he now ſincerely abjured, and of which he heartily repented.

Let him then teſtify his concern and regret as he ought, by avoiding your preſence, ſaid Mr. Howard. Had I known the other day that I was at the ſame table with the man who had dared ſubject you to inſult, I ſhould moſt aſſuredly——

Then thank heaven you did not, interrupted I. Indeed the leſs this affair is mentioned or remembered the better; and

and before you leave me I inſiſt on your promiſe never even to hint to Captain Farnford your knowledge of theſe particulars. I aſk it as a favour, the grant of which is eſſential to my peace. You need not, I am ſure, be told how delicate an interference of this kind muſt prove, where my fame and my repoſe are ſo deeply intereſted. Let me beſeech you therefore to give me your word never to take notice to Captain Farnford of what you have been informed.

I need not at leaſt be told, ſaid he with gravity, that the title by which I ſhould in that caſe act might be juſtly called in queſtion; but as I have the happineſs at preſent of conſidering you as being under my particular protection, tho' I hope that you will ſoon experience a parent's care, you muſt not inſiſt on binding me from acting as circumſtances may in future require. I agree ſo entirely in your ſentiments however, as to the delicacy

of

of this matter, that you may reſt aſſured while the wretch moleſts you no more I ſhall not interfere, though I ſhould have the moſt perfect ſatisfaction in chaſtiſing him for his impudence.

But I have not done with my diſagreeable explanation, Miſs Seymour, continued Mr. Howard, and your acute ſenſibility almoſt intimidates me from confeſſing all to you, ſince I am afraid what I am going to add muſt wound in a ſtill more vulnerable part; for I am well aware that to a youthful and enthuſiaſtic heart, no blow is ſo painful, no pang is ſo ſevere, as to be told it has beſtowed its affections unworthily.

Theſe words threw me into a ſtate of confuſed conſternation not to be deſcribed, and dyed my cheeks with bluſhes: for indeed my imagination hurried me in an inſtant into a thouſand wild conjectures; the truth however after a moment ruſhed upon my mind. You need not fear to alarm

alarm me as to this part of your information, cried I, for it is no ſecret to me; and the ſhock, tho' at firſt extremely diſtreſſing, received its cure in the reſentment and indignation which treatment ſo abominable excited. It is of Mrs. Weldon I perceive you are going to ſpeak; but tho' I am in part acquainted with the artifice and duplicity of her character, a myſtery ſurrounds her ſituation through which I have not been able to penetrate. I then briefly related the alarming ſituation into which that horrid woman had ſo artfully drawn me, and the fortunate circumſtances that had relieved me from my danger. Mr. Howard was loſt in aſtoniſhment at my recital, and ſhuddered on reflecting how critical the ſnare might have proved in which this infamous woman had ſo inhumanly entrapped me.

Mr. Roatſley, ſaid he, has let me into the particulars of her hiſtory, which are well known, and have made no ſmall noiſe;

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noiſe; tho' from her change of name I never could have ſuſpected that Mrs. Weldon was the famous Mrs. Brereton, whoſe imprudence has long been no ſecret to the world.

Good heavens! cried I, how then could ſuch a woman find admittance to the abode of Madame de Clarence. Has ſhe too been deceived by her artifices?

I believe it is not unknown to you, returned he, that among the number of Monſieur de Clarence's good qualities, thoſe of attachment to his amiable lady, and a proper diſcharge of domeſtic duties, are not to be enumerated. Mrs. Weldon appeared at the chateau as his friend, nor did Madame ſuſpect that under that ſpecious character, ſhe had harboured her moſt invidious enemy; till about the time of your departure from Languedoc, or immediately after it.

Mr. Howard then informed me more particularly of this profligate woman's real

real hiſtory. She was, it ſeems, originally a girl of low birth, whoſe name was Ware, and whoſe uncommon beauty induced Colonel Brereton, at the age of ſixty five, to pay his addreſſes to her, having become violently enamoured from accidentally meeting with her at an aſſembly while his regiment was quartered at York. This gentleman, though of a very limited underſtanding, as may be concluded from his conduct on this imprudent occaſion, poſſeſſed an affluent fortune, and was nearly related to Lord Belmont. His lady's taſte for gallantry became ſoon ſuſpected, and at laſt grew ſo notorious, that finding herſelf gradually deſerted by that brilliant circle to which her marriage had introduced her, and to charm and embelliſh which ſhe poſſeſſed ſo powerfully every talent, ſhe perſuaded her huſband, ever blind to his diſhonour and infatuated by her inſinuating addreſs, to carry her over to France,

where

where her amours, though well known, were leſs prejudicial to her gay career, becauſe unproductive of the world's contempt, at leaſt the faſhionable part of it, and unattended by its deſertion.

Her huſband, dying about a twelvemonth after, bequeathed her his whole fortune, the greateſt part of which had already fallen a ſacrifice to her unbounded extravagance. Mr. Brereton's natural heir, however, at preſent diſputes at law the portion of it that remains, alledging that from ſome private entail he was not empowered to diſpoſe of it at pleaſure; and it is thought the lady will be legally deprived of an inheritance which ſhe ſo little deſerves, and which ſhe gained merely by the effects of her artful management, and the powerful influence ſhe poſſeſſed over her ſuperannuated huſband.

After Mr. Brereton's death, his wife's conduct became ſo flagrant as to force thoſe who had been hitherto willingly blind

blind to her infamy no longer to ſhut their eyes, and as a proper regard to the rules of propriety is a tax which virtue never more rigorouſly exacts from vice than where her genuine and intrinſic value is leaſt admitted, ſhe ſoon found her ſtay in France could not enable her to continue in that brilliant ſociety where ſhe had been accuſtomed to ſhine with ſuch eclat. At this period, her acquaintance with Monſieur de Clarence commencedwhile he ſpent ſome time at the city of M—— for the recovery of his health, whither his lady had not accompanied him.

He ſoon became enſlaved by the charms of Mrs. Brereton, and weakly conſented to her requeſt of being invited to the reſidence of his lady at the Chateau de Clarence, on the footing of a friend recommended to his peculiar care by her deceaſed huſband. Madame de Clarence was eaſily deceived; and without difficulty

difficulty conſented to entreat the favour of a viſit from his agreeable Engliſh acquaintance, who on her part regarding it as an ingenious ſtroke of policy to regain in ſome meaſure the good opinion of the world, to whom ſhe might boaſt being ſtill admitted into an intimacy ſo reſpectable, complied with eagerneſs and ſatisfaction. The company of the Chevalier de Mertane ſoon, however, interrupted the harmony which ſubſiſted between Monſieur de Clarence and Mrs. Weldon, (for ſuch was the name ſhe now choſe to aſſume, probably from an apprehenſion that the imprudence of Mrs. Brereton might not be wholly unknown even to Madame de Clarence, whilſt under a borrowed name ſhe might be eaſily impoſed on.) The youth and weakneſs of the Chevalier almoſt inſtantly ſuggeſted to that abandoned woman the hopes of repairing her injured reputation and her exhauſted finances, by an union, the

the rank and opulence of which offered both to her vanity and profuſion the moſt ample gratification.

This explanation fully accounts for the mortification and diſpleaſure, too painful for concealment, which ſhe ſo evidently diſcovered on perceiving the Chevalier's partiality for me. He was not however proof againſt her powers of faſcination; and after my determined rejection, accepted with great cordiality the conſolation which Mrs. Weldon's kindneſs afforded. He was indeed almoſt involved in this perilous ſnare, when the fortunate jealouſy of Monſieur de Clarence happily relieved him from his danger. That gentleman, influenced either by pique or principle, or perhaps by both, ſuddenly informed the Chevalier's father of the ſon's matrimonial intentions, as alſo with ſome particulars relating to the lady's character, which induced the old gentleman to appear unexpectedly

one morning at the chateau, from whence he carried off the Chevalier without allowing him the ceremonial of a private farewell conference with his miſtreſs.

From more circumſtances than one both Mr. Howard and I perceived that this affair muſt have been in agitation during the time of our abode in the family; for the poor Chevalier's departure ſucceeded ours but a few days, and it ſeems a thorough reconciliation having immediately taken place between Mrs. Weldon and Monſieur de Clarence, their mutual imprudence ſoon infuſed ſuſpicions into Madame which induced her to inſiſt upon that lady's inſtant diſmiſſion. To this demand the huſband, unwilling to come to an open rupture with Madame, whoſe family and connections demand peculiar reſpect, conſented; and Mrs. Weldon's lawſuit requiring her preſence in England, ſhe ſet off directly for this country.

I was

I was actually frozen with horror on learning this account. Good heavens! exclaimed I, does ſuch a character of vice and duplicity exiſt, and can it belong to woman?

Oh! Miſs Seymour, returned Mr. Howard, a mind like yours, delicate and pure, bleſſed with conſcious innocence and fortified with intuitive integrity, can form no ideas adequate to that degradation to which licentiouſneſs and profligacy often reduce the female mind; but to dwell no longer on a theme ſo melancholy, I muſt inform you, that after having related theſe particulars, which Mr. Roatſley had received from a friend lately arrived from the Continent, and intimately acquainted with the parties concerned, he confeſſed how inexpreſſibly confounded and aſtoniſhed he had been on perceiving you the morning before laſt ſtanding at the window of a houſe which he had been told was occupied by

his unworthy relation; and ſtill more was he ſhocked, when at a ſecond glance, he recollected Mrs. Brereton herſelf, whoſe features he inſtantly recognized, though it is many years ſince he beheld her. Scarcely could he credit his ſenſes. Yet ſo ſtrongly did the dignity and innocence of your countenance contradict this confirmation of your levity, that inſtead of convincing it awakened him from his error. Imprudent he might believe you, but infamous it was impoſſible he could for an inſtant ſuſpect you to be; and upon revolving the circumſtances in his mind, it inſtantaneouſly ſtruck him that the daring Farnford muſt have bribed that infamous woman to entrap you to her houſe. This idea no ſooner occurred, than a thouſand circumſtances ſeemed to enforce its conviction. Farnford's character, which though unſtained by actual villany, is looſe and unprincipled, aſſured him he would not be ſcrupulous in effecting

fecting his ends by whatever means in his power. He knew beſides that the woman was in his pay, and to lay him under further contributions, ſhe might be induced to miſrepreſent your behaviour, conſcious that the knowledge of your being a woman of rank and character muſt have checked his hopes and reſtrained his liberality to herſelf. Mr. Roatſley began to ſuſpect that your acquaintance with Mrs. Weldon might have originated alſo from ſome ſuch machinations, and he inſtantly determined to acquaint me with his ſuſpicions; and having enquired at our old lodgings for our preſent reſidence with the eagerneſs of a man of honour anxious to ſecure virtue and innocence from deſtruction, he haſtened to this houſe without loſs of time; for me only he enquired, for to me only could ſo delicate an explanation be made, but I was unluckily from home. Next morning he repeated his viſit, but

being engaged in buſineſs, he was denied admittance. On his return home, however, he encountered a gentleman with whom he is particularly intimate, and who in the confidence of friendſhip confeſſed to him how amazed he had been to meet with a young lady not only of the moſt elegant but of the moſt innocent and amiable appearance at the houſe of his profligate relation, Mrs. Weldon, who from being now notoriouſly infamous, was wholly excluded all honourable ſociety: his friend added, that this abandoned woman had repreſented the young lady, whoſe name was Seymour, as a girl of light character and dependant fortune, but having been more than once in her company, this injurious error had appeared to him ſo apparent, that he had thought it incumbent on him to atone for it by repreſenting to her the hazards of her ſituation, an information that had operated ſo violently on her ſpirits as fully

fully convinced him how entirely ſhe muſt have been deceived as to the character of her companion.

Amiable, generous Roatſley! May not I call the man ſo, my Sophia, who has ſo humanely intereſted himſelf in my affairs. How many, in a ſimilar ſituation, would have contented themſelves with leaving me to my fate, eſpecially after that perplexed ſeries of unfortunate events, which might have too juſtly led him to regard me with contempt; how few would have given themſelves the trouble of inveſtigating this matter to the foundation, and exerted themſelves in a manner ſo nobly, to extricate a young woman whoſe conduct he had ſo much reaſon to contemn, and who had been repreſented to him in a light ſo unworthy. Surely gratitude at leaſt may be allowed me after this ſtriking inſtance of a benevolence of which I have reaped ſo largely the fruit: yet heaven grant that

this dangerous ſentiment lead not my heart too far. Vexatious it has indeed proved; but ah! Sophia, had not heaven directed and preſerved me, this intelligence had arrived greatly too late.

The whiſt party breaking up, and ſupper being announced, Mr. Howard ſeized an opportunity, while we were on the ſtairs, to whiſper that Mr. Roatſley regretted extremely not having ſeen my ſiſter and me this morning, when he had called, particularly as he leaves town tomorrow, and is engaged by buſineſs the early part of the day. Mr. Howard however, who was not ſufficiently acquainted with many of the unaccountable facts to which Mr. Roatſley's ſtory alluded, and was only enabled, from his knowledge of my diſpoſition and character, to pronounce that ſome myſterious appearances muſt have involved my actions in obſcurity, had of his own accord offered him

him a ſhort viſit before his departure, to explain from my own information what had ſeemed either extraordinary or imprudent in my conduct, and is actually to meet him at the Britiſh Coffee-houſe for that purpoſe.

I hope, added that worthy friend, with a penetrating ſmile, as he entered the ſupper room, that Mr. Roatſley, in his return to town, will find the diſagreeable air of ſecrecy and myſtery, which muſt confound all his enquiries reſpecting you and your ſiſter, completely removed by the approbation and public countenance of Lord Belmont.

I took no notice of this little hint; but walked on with a mind ah! how enlightened! how relieved! to find myſelf reinſtated in Mr. Roatſley's good opinion; to know that he had ſhewn himſelf ſo anxious, ſo deeply concerned in an affair in which I alone was intereſted, gave a ſpirit to my countenance, and a gaiety

to my heart, not to be enjoyed but when contraſted by previous uneaſineſs and depreſſion.

JAN. 28.

Ah! my dear Sophia! how infinitely am I ſhocked. Poor Madame de Clarence! alas! ſhe is no more! A ſhort letter from her huſband, which I received laſt night, announces this melancholy intelligence. An epidemic fever carried her off after a week's illneſs, and Fanny and I have been weeping her irreparable loſs with tears of bitter affliction. A friend—a maternal friend! reſpected and beloved, is a bleſſing which heaven ſends but once in our lives, and to us can never be ſupplied. In our preſent ſituation, this blow cannot fail to be felt with redoubled poignancy. There now remains not to us one ſingle friend of our own ſex,

ſex, (my Sophia, my invaluable Sophia excepted) who excites or returns to us the tender intereſt of affection. What a diſmal, what a ſolitary ſtate. That wretch, Mrs. Weldon! how I deteſt her, for troubling with ſuſpicion and uneaſineſs the mind of that amiable, that reſpectable woman, ſo near the cloſe of her days. Oh were ſhe capable of remorſe, how muſt it wring her boſom at this moment.

I am inexpreſſibly anxious to learn a thouſand particulars relating to this dear friend's laſt illneſs: for her huſband's letter is extremely conciſe, and merely informs us, in terms of unfeigned affliction, of the melancholy event. Doubtleſs he muſt be overwhelmed with the moſt poignant diſtreſs; that diſtreſs which reſults from the reflection of a miſconduct he preſerves no longer the power of repairing.

We inclined much to indulge our ſadneſs in our own apartment; but Mrs. Hindon

Hindon ſoon drove us from ſolitude by inſiſting upon ſitting with us in order to *comfort us:* and the poor woman talked ſo inceſſantly of the delicacy and acuteneſs of her feelings, and repeated ſuch various inſtances of the exceſs of her own unfortunate ſenſibility, that we were glad to accompany her down ſtairs to the gentlemen, as ſome relief from her tedious converſation.

FEB. 1.

Sir Edward called again this morning. He really appears to be an amiable man, and poſſeſſes ſomewhat in his appearance ſo mild and unpreſuming, that he prepoſſeſſes one at firſt ſight in his favour.

I forgot to tell you that Mr. Roatſley and Mr. Howard met the other morning according to appointment; and after an explanatory

explanatory converſation, which the former aſſured Mr. Howard was wholly unneceſſary, as not a doubt could remain on his mind after having been favoured with an opportunity of being in Miſs Seymour's company at the Opera, he ſet out on his excurſion.

FEB. 2.

Sir Edward ſupped with us this evening. Mrs. Hindon, delighted with an acquaintance of his figure and addreſs, has given him a general invitation to her houſe, which he ſeems well diſpoſed to accept, and repays her civilities with abundant marks of attention.

FEB. 6.

Captain Wilmot had been, as uſual, in earneſt converſation yeſterday evening with

with Fanny, who while ſhe pretends to laugh at his abſurdities always appears pleaſed with his aſſiduities. He had been repeating to her a number of verſes, all on the ſoft ſubject of love, which he informed her were the effuſions of his own paſſion that had inſpired him with a poetical ardour. Of one of theſe Fanny inconſiderately requeſted a copy, not reflecting that to demand a poem, of which ſhe was herſelf the theme, confeſſed no little ſatisfaction at the compliment. Wilmot told her he had it in his pocket book, which he haſtily produced; and anxious to avoid obſervation, privately delivered to her a paper without himſelf looking into it.

Fanny having no opportunity to peruſe the ſtanzas, ſlipped them into her pocket, from whence ſhe drew them the moment we retired after ſupper: when conceive her aſtoniſhment on finding the copy of verſes converted into a letter directed

rected to Captain Wilmot. Haſtily throwing her eyes over it, ſhe was ſtruck with the words—"your old flame Jenny Parſons," and ſuddenly yielding to a curioſity which cannot be defended, ſhe took advantage of the poor youth's unfortunate blunder, and read as follows:

TO CAPTAIN WILMOT.

DEAR WILMOT,

Your epiſtle arrived very opportunely to rouſe me from a ſtupor that has congealed and benumbed all my faculties ever ſince we were ordered to this confounded quarter, which is undoubtedly the dulleſt ſpot under heaven, and which Providence ſeems to have ſtamped with an impreſſion of gloom and laſſitude not to be expreſſed. There is not a ſoul in the town with whom one can aſſociate with any degree of ſatisfaction. The very girls are as ugly as devils; and what

what is ſtill worſe, as moſt of the officers are either on furlow or abſent on recruiting duty, there are none here except Wilſon and the Major; and the latter is ſo conſtantly immured amidſt a library of muſty old folios, that it is merely at meſs hours we ever ſet eyes upon him.

I am extremely happy to learn, from your letter, that the time which hung ſo heavily on my hands, *you* have been employing ſo much to your ſatisfaction and advantage. From the account you give me of your Dulcinea, I agree with you in opinion that ſhe will not hold out the ſiege much l nger, when to your own aſſiduities are ſuperadded the aſſiſtance and ſolicitations of your aunt, who being a diſcreet matron may give an air of credit and propriety to a ſtep which, with all due deference, you muſt allow me to call imprudent, as I ſuſpect the fortune of the beautiful Seymour is no

leſs

leſs neceſſary to the rapacious demands of your creditors, than the poſſeſſion of the young lady herſelf is to the claims of your paſſion; but I ſincerely hope, thro' the prudent management of Mrs. Hindon, ſhe has no chance of being made acquainted with theſe diſagreeable and *unneceſſary* particulars till the information can be attended with no alarming conſequences.

It muſt be confeſſed, Wilmot, that for one ſo *deeply* enamoured you talk very *reaſonably* on the topic of your miſtreſs; and though you tell me ſhe is divine, you evidently prefer expatiating on her more ſubſtantial attractions. You retail, indeed, her proſpects and poſſeſſions with the accuracy of an army agent.

I hope, by this time, you have brought matters to a happy concluſion. Indeed, as your affairs are at preſent ſituated, no time is to be loſt. Fortune does not throw a gift of ten thouſand pounds into the

the arms of a ſoldier every day; and you may reaſonably conclude that the grandfather will not be ſo eaſily *melted to compliance*, as you tell me the girl herſelf has been, nor can you flatter yourſelf his Lordſhip will prove ſo wholly influenced by diſintereſted ſentiments as to remain contentedly ignorant of your ſituation reſpecting pecuniary matters. His interference would effectually blow up the whole ſcheme; and if your point is not ſettled paſt redemption before his return, you may hang yourſelf on the firſt willow you meet with between London and Coventry.

I can't help laughing at the difficulties you muſt have to encounter in courting your fair one under the eye of your old flame Jenny Parſons. This untoward circumſtance muſt throw a conſtraint over your behaviour and addreſs, by no means favourable to your deſire of pleaſing: yet to have fulfilled your engage-

ments

ments in that quarter muſt have proved unmitigated ruin to both; and ſhe is ſo ſoft, poor gentle ſoul, that if ever a deſerted miſtreſs was to be truſted where retaliation was in her power, I dare ſay Miſs Parſons might be the woman. Conſider it entirely reſts with her to overturn the whole machine of your ingenious ſcheme. You tell me you have been ſo prudent that you are convinced ſhe does not even ſuſpect your intentions; and that your management could not have been diſcernable even to the eye of jealouſy. Remember, however, that revenge is a ruling paſſion in the ſex; nor are they ever to be truſted where offended pride muſt ſtimulate to vengeance.

Heartily wiſhing you all the ſucceſs you can wiſh, and requeſting to be immediately made acquainted with it, I conclude, with my caution, as above; and remain, dear Wilmot,

wholly your's,

F. HARLOW.

You may eaſily judge how confounded Fanny muſt be to perceive by this letter, ſo wonderfully preſented to her knowledge, that with all his timidity and diffident deſire of ingratiating himſelf, Wilmot regarded his ſolicitations as certain of ſucceſs, and had communicated his expectations to his friend with all the vanity of a man who did not allow himſelf even to doubt.

I was employed laſt night pretty late, and was ſtill reading in my dreſſing room, when my ſiſter, who I concluded was gone to bed, flew to me with the epiſtle in her hand, with a countenance as pale as death, in which mortification, anger, and aſtoniſhment were ſtrongly painted. She informed me of the accident; and as tears are a relief which Fanny has ever at hand, her gentle diſpoſition allowing of no other vent to her indignation, ſhe could not help crying from vexation

vexation, while ſhe entreated me to read it.

The part of it, however, which provoked her moſt, was that humiliating ſentence where Wilmot appears to have boaſted to his correſpondent that ſhe had been very *eaſily melted to compliance*, a phraze that ſeverely wounded her pride. You ſee, cried ſhe, he has never once mentioned me. I dare ſay he never thought about me. 'Tis my fortune alone about which he is ſo anxious. No doubt it would have been of ſome ſervice in advancing him in his profeſſion; but God knows, had he been informed how matters ſtand, he never would have paid me his addreſſes on account of an advantage which no longer exiſts, and he is both weak and vain if he concludes I have been ſo *eaſily melted* as he flattered himſelf, or that I have liſtened with pleaſure to ſolicitations which have fatigued

tigued and tormented me ever ſince our reſidence in this houſe.

Solicitations, Fanny, cried I; I never knew till this moment that Wilmot had made any advances that could go under the name of ſolicitations. Strange indeed, if I have continued thus long ignorant of any part of his behaviour, yet certain I am you have never once hinted to me any thing which could be conſtrued into that meaning.

Oh! my dear Hermione! exclaimed ſhe, burſting into a freſh flood of tears, I will tell you all.

All! cried I, terrified at the expreſſion, what is the *all* of which you are to inform me? for indeed I ſuſpected ſome frightful imprudence from the agitation in which I beheld her.

She could not, however, immediately relieve my fears, and tears of mortification choaked her utterance.

Oh! cried ſhe at length, how can I tell

tell you; you, that are older and ſo much wiſer than I, you will think meanly of me, and I would ſooner loſe the good opinion of the whole world than be deſpiſed by you.

My deareſt Fanny, ſaid I in the tendereſt accents, you may aſſure yourſelf that is impoſſible. My knowledge of your heart muſt ever conceal and extenuate all your little errors, and it is unkind in you to imagine that mine could for an inſtant harbour a ſentiment ſo injurious of which you were the object.

She then confeſſed to me that about ten days ago Wilmot had declared his paſſion in the warmeſt and moſt affecting terms; and though I did not love him, cried ſhe, at leaſt I am certain it gave me no pain to reject him on my own account, yet I could not be wholly unmoved at prayers and entreaties which ſeemed the reſult of the moſt ardent affection; an affection, repeated ſhe, which I now plainly

plainly perceive my fortune alone inſpired. All however that he deſired, remitting his hopes of ſucceſs to time and aſſiduity, was that you, whom he apprehended and whom I well knew not to be in his intereſt, ſhould not for ſome time be made acquainted with his propoſals; and to this requeſt, ſoftened by his apparent diſtreſs, I was weak enough unwillingly to conſent; though it ſhocked me extremely that you, who are my only friend and advizer, and to whom every thought of my heart has ever been known, ſhould continue ignorant of an affair which but for this fortunate diſcovery might have intereſted it too much.

As ſhe finiſhed ſpeaking, ſhe ſobbed on my boſom moſt bitterly. You may believe I embraced and ſoothed her tenderly. But tell me, my dear, ſaid I, what further lengths you have been prevailed with to go. There are no engagements in the caſe I hope.

No,

No, thank God, cried ſhe, though heaven knows how I have been perſecuted and tormented, not only by Wilmot himſelf but by Mrs. Hindon, who has warmly eſpouſed his cauſe and privately pleaded his paſſion on every occaſion when ſhe could get me by myſelf; and not having my beloved Hermione to direct me, for they both kept me ſteadily to my raſh promiſe of ſecrecy, though I often deſired permiſſion to diſcloſe this affair to you, into what an abyſs of miſery might I not have been plunged from my folly and inexperience; bewildered by Mrs. Hindon's partial repreſentation of this imprudent ſtep, and ſoftened by the continual aſſiduities and deſpair of a man who ſeemed to adore me.

Artful wretches! can I give them, Sophia, a milder appellation? What a plan was here to entrap my amiable, innocent, unſuſpecting Fanny. And becauſe my eyes were ſuppoſed to be open to

the thouſand objections againſt a match, in favour of which not one ſingle advantage can be preſented, I was to be kept out of the ſecret till too late effectually to interfere; whilſt my dear and only ſiſter was to prove a victim to the need and prodigality of the one, and to the abſurd and deſtructive vanity of the other.

What a deſpicable character does this letter plainly prove Wilmot's to be. I am amazed, on looking back, that the whole affair did not occur to my ſuſpicion. But the art of the one, and the low cunning of the other, added to my truſt in Fanny's confidence in my advice, all conſpired to deceive me. You ſee too, there is a hint of a previous engagement. Poor Miſs Parſons! her dejection and depreſſion are now fully accounted for. How hard has been her fate. Deprived of her parents at a period of life when the feelings are moſt acutely ſenſible to the ſhafts of misfortune,

tune, conſtrained to endure a haughty and indelicate dependance, her affections and her pride had yet a wound more painful to receive, a ſting more corroding to undergo. Her ſufferings, and her patient forbearance of complaint, endear her to me in the moſt affecting point of view, and I ſhall now more anxiouſly than ever exert myſelf to ſoften her anguiſh, by every kindneſs and attention in my power to beſtow.

As to my dear Fanny, though this providential diſcovery produced a temporary mortification, and drew ſome tears of vexation from her eyes, her heart, ſlightly if at all touched, had nothing deeply to hurt or painfully to intereſt it; and as ſhe was thoroughly ſenſible of the riſques from which ſhe had juſt eſcaped, ſhe beheld with horror the precipice on which ſhe had been ſtanding, and required not either argument or perſuaſion (though by way of caution I beſtowed

both very laviſhly) to convince her how fortunate this accident had proved. Her innocent mind, unacquainted with diſguiſe and unuſed to concealment, felt relieved of a painful weight by the confeſſion which her firſt agitation had extorted from her; yet I had no little difficulty in reconciling her to herſelf on account of having forfeited her promiſe, which indeed ſhe had falſified almoſt unconſciouſly in the height of her emotions.

Since I have done ſo, ſaid ſhe, though I think I have been to blame, do not expoſe me to Mrs. Hindon. Diſhonourably as ſhe has acted towards me, I ought not to have receded from the promiſe I gave. I ought indeed to have poſſeſſed both ſenſe and reſolution ſufficient for acting without counſel; but you may reſt aſſured never, never, ſhall I riſque my peace by granting another promiſe to the ſame purport. I have ſuffered too ſeverely

ſeverely from this ill judged concealment, and ſhall take the firſt opportunity of informing Mrs. Hindon that I am determined in my reſolution never again to liſten to her nephew on the ſubject of his paſſion—never indeed ſhall he have an opportunity of tormenting me more.

To calm her, I gave her my word I ſhould not mention one ſyllable of the matter to Mrs. Hindon. Yet I was ſomewhat at a loſs how to proceed. To apply to Mr. Howard, was to hazard engaging him in a quarrel with his ſiſter in law; nor could I myſelf reſent her behaviour while we were partaking of her civilities. I reſolved therefore to be ſilent on the ſubject; and by never quitting Fanny's ſide, who herſelf wiſhed to avoid any intercourſe with Wilmot, ſo to regulate her manner in future as entirely to deſtroy the hopes to which his vanity and her imprudence had given riſe. Yet I could hardly talk to the art-

ful woman this morning at breakfaſt with any degree of temper.

FEB. 14.

Sir Edward ſpent yeſterday evening here; and really grows ſo very particular, both in his attentions and converſation, that I begin to feel the neceſſity of a reſerve, which his modeſty, and the obligations I owe him, render very unpleaſant. Adieu! my Sophia. I have juſt received your delightful packet. Ah my love! are there no hopes, now you are ſo near as Paris, that your father may be prevailed with to pay England a viſit. Oh that I were with you to ſolicit this favour on my knees.

H. SEYMOUR.

LETTER XII.

TO MISS BEAUMONT.

FEB. 15.

WELL, Sophia, our doom is at laſt determined. My grandfather's anſwer is arrived. Yet not addreſſed to us: that would have been a condeſcenſion too great. He has not even deigned to acknowledge my letter; but has ordered Lady Linroſe to inform us. But let her Ladyſhip's letter ſpeak for itſelf.

TO LAURENCE HOWARD, ESQ.

SIR,

I was this day favored with an anſwer from Nice, and I delay not a moment in

acquainting you with the reſult of your application, although I am extremely ſorry to premiſe that it is not of a nature that can either prove agreeable to your own wiſhes or to thoſe of the young ladies committed to your charge.

In ſpite of the indefatigable trouble I have taken, and the perſuaſive arguments I have uſed in more than one letter, to repreſent their ſituation in a light the moſt diſmal and affecting, his Lordſhip remains quite inexorable to all my entreaties. He tells me that the revival of recollections ſo bitter, as this ſubject recalls to his memory, has given a mortal ſtab to that repoſe which time had in ſome meaſure reſtored, and he deſires, as he is not at liberty himſelf to addreſs the ladies, that through the medium of my pen they may be informed, that when the conduct of their unhappy parent forced him to renounce him, he bound himſelf by a ſolemn reſolution it ſhould

be

be for ever; nor that any conſideration ſhould prevail on him through life, to ſee, countenance, or hold the ſlighteſt intercourſe with the offspring of a calamity which has loaded his days with mortification and miſery. His Lordſhip concludes by laying his commands upon me, under pain of his perpetual diſpleaſure, ſtrictly to obſerve a ſimilar conduct, and expreſſes himſelf with a ſternneſs and force which conſtrains me, with all the diſpoſition imaginable to ſerve the young ladies, to give up all thoughts of making myſelf or family known to them. I hope therefore, after this diſagreeable information, which with infinite pain to myſelf I am obliged to divulge, they will neither be ſurpriſed nor offended when I acknowledge that a firm adherence to Lord Belmont's prohibition is the unavoidable conſequence of its having been made known; and that I think myſelf obliged, after requeſting the favor of one

line more on this ſubject, to decline even all further correſpondence upon it.

As I cannot but feel warmly intereſted in two young perſons, who ſuffer ſo unfortunately for errors for which in ſtrict juſtice they cannot be eſteemed accountable, I was extremely happy Sir, to underſtand from you, that your wards laboured under no difficulties in regard to fortune. I take it for granted therefore that they poſſeſs that ſum which Lord Linroſe received from the generoſity of his father, and which I know was reckoned a very noble ſtipulation in Lord Belmont to grant after a conduct ſo weak, diſhonourable, and irritating to all his friends. Had any pecuniary aſſiſtance been required, I ſhould certainly have riſqued my Lord's diſpleaſure by contributing from my own private purſe what might have been of ſervice for their eaſe and comfort; but as this is by no means neceſſary, and the ladies are in poſſeſſion of

of an affluence which allows them to purſue what plan of life they chuſe, and to ſettle wherever they may incline, if I might be allowed to interfere with my advice on this head, I would take the liberty of ſuggeſting that France, which may in a manner be called their native country, muſt to them undoubtedly prove a more eligible, as well as a more agreeable reſidence than England is ever likely to become. A hint muſt convince them that where the ſtain of their father's faults is unknown they certainly enjoy a better chance of being reſpected, than where remembrance muſt ever ſubject them to the impertinence of curioſity, and perhaps, however unjuſtly, to unmerited contempt.

I approve highly of the modeſty and prudence they have teſtified in not aſſuming a name, the renunciation of which was the conſequence of family diſhonor; and I make no doubt they will equally

ſupport

ſupport their claim to thoſe virtues in future, by carefully concealing their title to it. Any attempt to the contrary would but produce the diſagreeable effect of renewing the recollection of a fate which muſt diſcredit it, and never can be of ſervice to them in the world's opinion, and which, from the great length of time that has elapſed ſince thoſe circumſtances engaged in ſo great a degree the public attention, is now wholly ſunk into oblivion.

I ſhould be happy, Sir, to learn, if you would for once favor me with a line for that purpoſe, what the determination of your wards is likely to be; tho' after this communication I am unwillingly conſtrained to aſk no farther, compaſſion compels me to be anxiouſly ſolicitous in regard to the fate of two young perſons, whom, in ſpite of the reſtrictions which paternal

paternal authority impoſes, I ſhall ever conſider as nearly allied to my family.

I remain, with eſteem, Sir, your moſt obedient ſervant,

CAROLINE LINROSE.

Well, Sophia, what do you think of this letter? All our abſurd and romantic hopes, hitherto ſupported by the chimeras of a ſanguine and deluſive imagination, are at one blow finally cruſhed. No redreſs you find. A ſolemn reſolution deprives us even of a flattering poſſibility that Lord Belmont, (alas! I dare not give him the tender appellation of grandfather,) may allow nature and compaſſion to plead for us in his boſom. He forbids our claims, denies our title to his protection, and breaks with us for ever. Oh! my Sophia, my dear and only friend! our hearts are deeply wounded by

by this ſtroke. Fanny and I have been weeping the loſs of our laſt parent in each other's arms; and on this occaſion I have been faithfully acting up to the encomium once beſtowed on me, of inſtilling conſolation at a moment when I could not myſelf imbibe comfort from my own arguments.

We were ſitting at table with ſome company after dinner, when this cruel letter was put into Mr. Howard's hands. He aſked leave to break the ſeal; and upon haſtily peruſing the firſt lines, changed colour and left the room. My apprehenſions inſtantly told me from whence it came, and what were the contents; yet I kept my ſeat in ſeeming compoſure till Mrs. Hindon withdrew with the ladies to the drawing room.

My impatience then left me no longer reſolution to remain in this anxious inquietude; and unwilling to make Fanny a ſharer in my uneaſineſs, I ſtole ſoftly

to

to Mr. Hindon's ſtudy, where I concluded Mr. Howard would be, and tapping at the door, aſked permiſſion to enter. He opened it immediately. The diſappointment which your countenance cannot conceal, ſaid I, too evidently explains all I want to know.

Preſſing my hand—Here is the letter, anſwered he. I can ſay nothing to mitigate its unwelcome contents. Yet what boſom can boaſt ſuperior fortitude to Miſs Seymour's, whoſe mind ſuggeſts more powerful and alleviating conſolations for a misfortune in which neither imprudence nor miſconduct involves her. He then gave me the letter, and walked up ſtairs to ſend down Fanny to receive the news.

She found me drowned in tears, which this complete diſappointment to all our hopes could not but at firſt produce: but ſoon that mixture of indelicacy and pretended compaſſion which the letter contained

tained, by exciting my reſentment fortified my ſpirits. Narrow-minded woman! Does ſhe ſuppoſe all the world influenced by ſentiments of equal meanneſs with her own? does ſhe conclude that reproach and contempt muſt be our portion, becauſe our parent erred and was unhappy. He ſuffered, alas, ſufficiently for his faults, without entailing their miſerable conſequences on his offspring, and heaven I truſt has accepted the tribute of his remorſe.

Pecuniary aſſiſtance; oh! may it pleaſe a wiſe and gracious Providence to avert a calamity ſo inſupportable, ſo degrading as dependence on Lady Linroſe would prove. Rather, my Sophia, let us owe the mere neceſſaries of exiſtence to the honeſt labour of our hands. Ah! rake not up the aſhes of the dead! Cruel woman; why does ſhe write with a ſhew of ſympathy ſhe feels not, and of pity which borders on inſult, while ſuch bit-

ter

ter expreſſions drop from her pen, (expreſſions which ſhe well knew muſt recall the moſt diſtreſſing reflections) for errors that long ſince were expiated and forgiven.

Poor Fanny's ſanguine expectations were ſo cruelly daſhed, and her ſpirits ſo ſunk by this blow, that I found it doubly incumbent on me to exert my own in order to ſupport hers. I reflected that this diſappointment, as ſuggeſted by Mr. Howard, was not the conſequence either of our folly or our faults: it was an event I had ever believed poſſible, and often feared was probable, nor could it ever have depended on our own conduct to have averted or eſcaped it. Pride intermixed itſelf in many motives of conſolation; and in ſuch circumſtances the aſſiſtance of that ſentiment (in many caſes the error of our nature) is perhaps the moſt ſalutary ſource from which comfort can flow.

My

My grandfather's vow, (for ſtill will I call him ſo) if it cannot be recalled, yet ſurely extends not to Lady Linroſe. Were ſhe poſſeſſed of a mind noble and enlarged; were it not ſelfiſh, little, and intereſted, never would ſhe have given implicit obedience to a meaſure ſo unfeeling and unjuſt as that of renouncing two friendleſs girls, in a foreign country, where they have no claims for kindneſs or protection except on thoſe whom benevolence and humanity induce to be the friends of the unfortunate.

Mr. Howard ſoon joined us. I was quite compoſed when he entered, and aſſiſted his arguments ſo effectually, that Fanny became at length more compoſed; We remained together a conſiderable time in converſation; till at length we were interrupted by the appearance of Mrs. Hindon.

Good ſtars! in tears my dear ladies, cried ſhe. What on earth can be the matter?

matter? for God's ſake tell me what has diſtreſſed you in this manner? Brother, what can it be?

On being informed—God Almighty! cried ſhe, renounce you! Lord Belmont renounce you! What on earth will then become of you, for to my certain knowledge you will never ſee one ſhilling of the money that was lodged in Mr. Benſley's hands.

Pardon me, Madam, cried Mr. Howard with evident diſpleaſure, I hope part of it will certainly be recovered.

Part of it—what perhaps one paltry thouſand, or it may be two, out of the twenty-four. That's part of it with a vengeance. What will two thouſand be to them, who have been accuſtomed to want for nothing, and to have things always handſome and genteel about them. Indeed it is moſt deplorable. But pray Miſs Seymour if you was yourſelf to write to Lady Linroſe, for you know you are

extremely

extremely clever at your pen, and was to repreſent your deſtitute condition in the moſt moving terms, don't you think ſhe might be prevailed on to intercede with Lord Belmont to allow you ſomething yearly, or in caſe that failed to grant it herſelf.

Not for a thouſand worlds! cried I. If our affairs are in this diſmal ſituation, we muſt accuſtom ourſelves to conform to our finances. It is a duty to live within the limits of what one poſſeſſes; the diſcharge of which is I think as eſſential as that of almoſt any other. To apply to any of our family after this renunciation, is what I never will for an inſtant think of.

And why not pray? cried ſhe. Fine talking indeed, of living like ſcrubs on fifty pounds a year, after having been brought up to forty times that ſum, when a ſtep ſo natural and ſimple might beſtow affluence and comfort inſtead of penury

penury and want. Tis nothing but pride, mere pride, which prevents you from following my advice, and indeed you muſt allow me to tell you ſo; beſides, as you have ſuch certain proofs by which to aſcertain your birth, if you make but buſtle enough, I dare ſay his Lordſhip will be glad to compound matters from the dread of your reviving the old ſtory by going to law with him; or if he won't be brought to hear reaſon, what do you think of actually commencing a proceſs. I'll warrant the bare idea of ſuch a proceeding will bring him to act as he ought to do. What ſay you brother to the ſcheme?

I would rather ſtarve, cried I with a warmth which her indelicacy made irrepreſſible.

Starve! Fine talking to be ſure. I'll wager Mr. Howard agrees with me, if people wont be perſuaded to behave properly why they muſt be compelled to it if poſſible.

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I cannot agree with you in this meaſure, indeed Madam, ſaid Mr. Howard, who ſeemed to have been loſt in thought ever ſince her entrance, for I cannot poſſibly conceive what advantage could reſult from Lord Belmont's being conſtrained to acknowledge his grandchildren: but it is impoſſible immediately to determine what ſteps ought to be purſued.

Oh to be ſure one ought to conſider certainly, and I make no doubt you will agree with me in opinion that ſome ſort of application ought immediately to be made to Lady Linroſe. But I have left my company below. Will you make your appearance ladies; or if you are not ſufficiently compoſed I ſhall ſend up Jenny with tea, for Lady Farnford and her daughter are juſt come in and will be ſurpriſed at my abſence.

She then left us: and I beſought Mr. Howard no longer to conceal any circumſtances

ſtances relating to our affairs, which it was neceſſary we ſhould be made acquainted with. Mrs. Hindon's information is but too true, I perceive, added I; but on what we poſſeſs we muſt contrive to ſubſiſt, and you need not be afraid to confeſs the worſt, for this diſappointment to my hopes has inured me to mortification.

I muſt acknowledge, anſwered he, that I am afraid Mrs. Hindon has authority but too good for the abrupt diſcovery ſhe has made of your affairs. As I flattered myſelf that pecuniary misfortunes would neither have been felt nor regarded while you enjoyed the affection and protection of Lord Belmont, I wiſhed not to diſturb you with the apprehenſion of an evil which might never arrive; but ſorry I am to confeſs the claims of Mr. Benſeley's creditors are become ſo great, that it is much to be feared your fortune will be reduced to pretty near what Mrs. Hindon

don mentioned—two thouſand pounds, or about that ſum. There is no ſaying however how things may turn out, as nothing is yet ſettled; but I wiſh not to flatter you, while I obſerve and admire that fortitude and ſtrength of mind that riſes ſuperior to diſappointments under which the bulk of mankind would ſink into deſpondency.

Well, my dear Sir, cried I, there is no help for this misfortune. Thank heaven a little yet remains. We muſt immediately think of ſome private abode, where we may live peaceably and tranquilly, no longer agitated with the wiſhes nor tormented by the expectations which have kept our minds ever ſince we left Languedoc in a ſtate of tumult and ſuſpenſe. All expectation is at an end; for we have nothing now to hope, but that we may enjoy enough out of the wreck of our fortune to exiſt with decency and comfort in obſcurity. What is it but returning

turning to a retirement that experience has convinced us we are capable of enjoying, and that habit and education have both conſpired to render even agreeable to us. We ſhall ſoon forget this buſy æra of our lives, or regard it but as an uneaſy, troubleſome dream, which we ſhall be delighted to find has vaniſhed away.

Upon you, my dear Sir, continued I, who have ſo faithfully and conſcientiouſly fulfilled the fatigueing and diſagreeable charge impoſed on you by my dear father, we muſt ſtill lean for further direction and aſſiſtance. Your goodneſs and zeal muſt expect ſtill further trouble in ſeeking out for us ſome humble reſidence. Our abode muſt be as ſimple as is conſiſtent with neatneſs and decency, in ſome retired ſpot in a cheap country.

And would you have the barbarity to exclude me from your dwelling, cried he, with a ſudden eagerneſs which he ſeemed

incapable of repreſſing, but which, as if conſcious of having gone too far, he inſtantly checked, and added in a ſoftened tone tho' with viſible emotion, will my dear and amiable wards allow me as their guardian, warmly intereſted in their happineſs, to propoſe a ſcheme—a ſcheme, repeated he heſitating, which I have been for ſome time revolving in my mind leſt things ſhould take this unfavorable turn. It is indeed a plan which no other circumſtances could have juſtified——and even now requires—But I ſhall lay hold of ſome other opportunity of preſenting it to your conſideration, when I have more clearly weighed it and conſidered it's conſequences.

Oh tell it us now, my dear Sir, cried Fanny with impatience. What would become of us if we had not ſo good, ſo kind, and ſo able a friend to adviſe us.

Mr. Howard, affected at theſe words, could hardly diſperſe a tear which ruſhed into

into his eye, and unable to anſwer, took advantage of Miſs Parſons entering to leave us haſtily. The ſoftneſs of that amiable girl's nature made Fanny's apparent grief infectious; and without uttering a ſyllable, ſhe gave way to a ſudden burſt of tears; which tender ſympathy, had I not been before prepoſſeſſed in her favour, would alone have endeared her to me. I was obliged to become her comforter likewiſe; and aſſured her we were weeping a diſappointment, not a calamity; and indulging in tears, which after the firſt ſhock it was weakneſs to allow to flow, and therefore merited not the kind compaſſion they had excited.

I was not a little ſurpriſed to diſcover that ſhe was perfectly informed not only of the ſubject of our preſent diſtreſs but with every circumſtance relating to our preſent ſituation, which ſhe told us Mrs. Hindon, oppreſſed with the ſecret, had been ſo eager to divulge, that not only

herſelf, but Lady Farnford and ſeveral of her friends below had been already partakers of it.

Mrs. Hindon muſt look upon her word as nothing, ſaid I, for ſhe promiſed ſecrecy.

Ah, Madam! if you knew all, cried ſhe, and ſhook her head emphatically—and indeed I have more than once thought of mentioning it to you; but as I ſaw little danger of your being led into difficulties, and beheld you poſſeſſed of prudence ſufficient to ſecure you from danger, I thought it needleſs to hazard my aunt's diſpleaſure, ſhould my conduct ever have become ſuſpected.

You mean with regard to Captain Wilmot, cried Fanny; but thank God the diſcovery you hint at has been already made, time enough to prevent any ill conſequences from his duplicity. Indeed had his fortune been ſplendid to my wiſh, and his affection as ſincere as I believe

lieve it pretended, to pity alone, not attachment, would he have owed the ſucceſs which Mrs. Hindon's artful repreſentations and my ſimple inexperience might perhaps have led me to beſtow.

I am afraid indeed Madam, anſwered ſhe, that my couſin merits not the honor of your good opinion. But as to that plan, though I have long ſuſpected it I never once dreamt of interfering, as I concluded till this moment it had not only the approbation of your own heart, but likewiſe of Miſs Seymour's judgment.

Far from it indeed, cried I. My opinion of Captain Wilmot has ever been ſuch, that independent of the embarraſſment of his fortune, this ſtep never ſhould have received my concurrence while I knew my ſiſter's heart was not deeply intereſted.

You amaze me Madam, for indeed Mrs. Hindon long ſince gave me to un-

derſtand that it was a match where no material objections on either ſide could poſſibly be oppoſed to obſtruct its progreſs.

Mrs. Hindon then ſpoke from her wiſhes, not her conviction, for from the beginning I am convinced ſhe dreaded its ſucceſs.

Well, Madam, ſaid Miſs Parſons, I heartily congratulate you on having eſcaped the ſnare; for it is a ſecret to few that Captain Wilmot, from a deſtructive paſſion for play, has mortgaged his eſtate, at no time conſiderable, to very near its full value, and if he has not already wholly ruined himſelf, his extravagance, unſubdued by experience, ſufficiently proves that ſuch a termination muſt ſoon take place. But on this head having received falſe intelligence, I concluded you acted from the dictates of affection; an idea which was ſufficient to deter me from interfering by an explanation

planation that might have been but indifferently received, and which at all events I could not have been juſtified for bringing to light.

I thought, cried I, you had begun by indirectly propoſing to reveal all. If ſecrecy was your determined reſolution how was this in your power?

I meant all that concerned you, Madam, not what regarded your ſiſter. Of her affairs I was informed, and in divulging my couſin's real ſituation, from the charges of treachery, however innocent my intention and however beneficial the conſequences, I could not have been wholly exculpated, while confidence alone had put it in my power to betray.

Miſs Parſons then haſtened to inform us, that on the very evening which ſucceeded that of our arrival in England, Mr. Howard having on his viſit to his brother and ſiſter diſcloſed our ſituation, and acquainted them with our real name

and ſplendid connection under the tie of ſecrecy, and likewiſe with the amount of our fortune, Mrs. Hindon ſeized the earlieſt opportunity of making a confidant of her friend Lady Farnford.

The two ladies were ſeated in Mrs. Hindon's dreſſing-room, which is merely divided by a thin partition from the apartment we at preſent occupy, and which was then inhabited by Miſs Parſons. She happened to be quietly placed at her book, when her ſtudies were interrupted by the converſation of the next room, and her attention ſo unavoidably attracted by the eager vociferation of this confidential tete a tete, that contrary either to her inclination or deſign, ſhe found herſelf in poſſeſſion of all their ſecrets.

The two friends, after pondering, wondering, and goſſiping, began to reflect that with ten thouſand in poſſeſſion, and at leaſt double that ſum in expectation, with

with the advantages of a ſplendid family connection, Fanny and I preſented no inconſiderable gratification to the avarice or vanity of any needy pretenders.

From theſe particulars they ſoon began to form wiſhes that prizes ſo conſiderable could be ſecured to their own families, by means of whatever males of their houſe ſhould be matrimonially diſpoſed: and Captain Wilmot, the nephew of the one, and Farnford, the ſon of the other, inſtantly occurred to the active and fertile imaginations of theſe buſy intermedling old women. Thoſe two gentlemen, in whom the ladies felt a mutual intereſt, were at once indigent and extravagant, good looking and ſhowy, circumſtances which rendered the ſucceſs of their ſchemes both eſſential and probable. They reſolved however carefully to conceal their plan till ripe for execution; doubting not but occaſional meetings and frequent intercourſe would gradually fa-

cilitate its progreſs and inſure it a fortunate concluſion. It was in conſequence of this that you two ladies were entreated with a diſplay ſo oſtentatious of hoſpitable civility to take up your abode in Mrs. Hindon's family.

Fanny and I both warmly thanked Miſs Parſons for this information, dictated by the keenneſs of her feelings and by that gratitude which a little kindneſs and a few trivial attentions had excited: attentions that no delicate mind could have withheld teſtifying even for a perſon leſs amiable, in a ſituation ſo humiliating as hers.

Good heavens! cried I, and was I too the object of a project? We have undoubtedly made a ſufficient return to Mrs. Hindon for all her civilities in furniſhing ſuch amuſing and intereſting ſubjects for her active ſpirit to work on. I think, however, as our fortune was the ſecret ſpring of all theſe intrigues, we have

have little reaſon now to apprehend either art or contrivances. The primary motive for all theſe ſpeculations has vaniſhed, and I ſhrewdly ſuſpect the unconquerable and violent paſſion which has occaſioned ſuch ravages in the boſoms of the two gentlemen, being deprived of this nouriſhment, will quietly ſink into neglect and indifference; the only advantage it muſt be confeſſed that reſults from this change in our proſpects.

This intelligence at another time might have occaſioned me uneaſineſs; but at the moment it was communicated the information was attended by a number of others ſo much more diſtreſſing, that I hardly gave it any attention. It only encreaſed the diſlike which reſentment at Mrs. Hindon's behaviour with regard to Fanny had before excited, and which, as this clue to her conduct deprived her even of the merit her hoſpitality and civilities

vilities had before claimed, now almoſt amounted to repugnance and contempt.

The motive of her advice, indelicate and unfeeling, to apply to Lady Linroſe, not merely for her mediation but even for her aſſiſtance, is now fully explained, as alſo the ſecret cauſe of that frigid chagrin too potent either for concealment or repreſſion, which diffuſed itſelf over both her manner and countenance on receiving the news of our cruel diſappointment.

Perhaps I am a little ſevere in my expreſſions: for after all, her diſappointment, poor woman, might prove little inferior to ours. Her deſigns and expectations are compleatly fruſtrated by the ſame unlucky event that puts ours to flight; and perhaps in ſome minds the deſires ſuggeſted by pride are as powerful as thoſe which reaſon, nature, and feeling excite. To loſe the hopes of an alliance that flatters her vanity, may to Mrs. Hindon prove a blow as ſevere as

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the ſhock which deprives us at once of a parent and the pleaſing comforts of family connections.

LETTER XIII.

TO MISS BEAUMONT.

FEB. 15, TWELVE AT NIGHT.

MRS. Hindon's company not having left her till late, I had ſome hours leiſure to purſue my journal. We then went down to ſupper, which proved a dull and comfortleſs repaſt. Mrs. Hindon was cold and out of humour; her huſband ſleepy and fatigued, Fanny dejected, Mr. Howard thoughtful, and for myſelf I was grave and ſilent. Miſs Jenny was indeed the only perſon in company who retained

retained her uſual behaviour; at all times ſoft, humble, and melancholy.

The change our ſituation had undergone in the eyes of Mrs. Hindon ſince the morning, ſhone conſpicuous in her manner, and produced an alteration hardly to be credited. That flattering civility, bordering often almoſt upon ſervility, thoſe profeſſions of unalterable eſteem, friendſhip, and regard, that uſed ſome times, from our utter inability to make adequate returns, abſolutely to overpower us, were this evening converted into frigid reſerve, mixed with a diſpleaſure which ſeemed to avow that ſhe could hardly forgive herſelf for having hitherto laviſhed upon us ſo much unneceſſary reſpect and attention, and for which mortification ſhe meant to indemnify herſelf in the ſeaſon of our humiliation, by making all proper repriſals. Poor woman! ſhe is infinitely miſtaken if ſhe imagines I am in the leaſt humbled by this reverſe. It

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is not, thank heaven, in the power of fortune to produce an effect ſo degrading on my mind. I looked down on her with a degree of pity which ſoftened my contempt, on witneſſing the littleneſs of mind her conduct betrayed.

We were not long in ſeparating for the night: and as I have too much anxiety on my ſpirits to hope for reſt, here am I retired to paſs an hour in chat with my deareſt Sophia, while poor Fanny is forgetting the buſy occurrences of this diſagreeable day in the ſoothing arms of ſleep.

Amidſt all the difficulties and mortifications we have encountered, and which at our time of life, when the feelings are all tremblingly alive and the paſſions eager and unſubdued, are endured with double anguiſh, how alleviating, how grateful to my heart is the conviction of my beloved Sophia's never failing ſympathy and affection. There yet remains

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to us heaven's firſt and choiceſt bleſſing—a dear and tender friend, who feels for our embarraſſments and enters into all our diſtreſſes with the kindeſt intereſt and warmeſt commiſeration. Oh! my Sophia! ought I then to complain?

Yet, yet, my dear, I indeed require your friendly ſympathy; for at this inſtant, without labouring, thank God, under any heavy affliction, (for in my opinion to the ſtings of guilt, or to the heart rending deſpair of loſing a friend tried and beloved, alone belongs that expreſſion), our ſituation is as comfortleſs, as diſagreeable as poſſible. How are we to diſpoſe of ourſelves? Mrs. Hindon's Houſe is no longer a reſidence for us. You will eaſily perceive the neceſſity of our quitting it in all haſte; and I make no doubt may likewiſe conjecture, that after the vexatious adventure into which our reſidence in lodgings ſo lately involved us, I muſt feel no ſmall degree

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of reluctance at the idea of venturing into others, without the protection of Mr. Howard, whoſe attendance muſt now of courſe ceaſe, when the title, though merely nominal, of our guardian is at an end; neither can I think without repugnance of remaining in town, cooped up in ſmall, confined, unwholeſome apartments, and of ſuch only will our finances allow; while a neat ruſtic habitation in the country can be procured perhaps at leſs expence.

Another motive no leſs powerful, conſpires to give additional force to my deſire of leaving London as ſoon as convenience will permit, and ſettling as far from it as poſſible; I will confeſs my vanity, for ſurely it is a natural pride—I cannot think of being recognized by Mr. Roatſley, after this change in our appearance, without pain. Were he like Mrs. Hindon, to diſcover by his behaviour that from our apparent fall we were

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ſunk in his eſtimation, I ſhould with eaſe caſt him from my heart for ever: but of this mean weakneſs, incident only to common minds, I cannot ſuſpect him. I fear only to be the object of his pity! Oh! Sophia! pity from Roatſley would mortify me more ſeverely than unmerited contempt from the reſt of the world.

How few are there who do not allow themſelves, perhaps unconſciouſly, to be more influenced by appearances than they ſuſpect. Miſs Seymour, while moving in a ſphere, if not ſplendid at leaſt creditable, is no longer the ſame perſon when reduced to exiſt only through the efforts of her own induſtry; and though ſtill entitled to the reſpect of the unprejudiced, nay perhaps to their eſteem, yet being ſunk to her intrinſic value, and deprived of a thouſand little adventitious circumſtances that give life and alacrity to an infant paſſion, how can it be ſuppoſed to combat and ſtruggle againſt

thoſe dangerous mortifications which are the greateſt foes to its progreſs.

No, Sophia, I ſincerely hope I ſhall ſee him no more. To you, I divulge every thought that oppreſſes my heart, for from your ſympathy alone I can hope to derive the ſlighteſt alleviation. To you then, my dear, I will acknowledge, that the ſevereſt wound my grandfather's renunciation has inflicted, is its having awakened me from a pleaſing deluſive dream, on the idea of which I have almoſt exiſted ever ſince I overheard Roatſley's acknowledgment to his friend of his partiality in my favour. I confeſs it was weak, it was unpardonable, to allow my mind to indulge in ſuch reveries; yet they ſtole on me imperceptibly, and I could not reſiſt giving way to the flattering hopes, that had he beheld me in that advantageous point of view in which rank and fortune ever place their votaries, had he ſeen me in the circle to which

which my birth entitles me—in ſhort, my dear, as we live not in the age of romance, where the ſplendors of life are wholly diſregarded, it is probable his riſing attachment would not have been greatly damped by the knowledge of my being Lord Belmont's grandchild, and poſſeſſed of a conſiderable fortune. Had this been the *ſole* motive, or even the *chief* one, little ſhould I have prized the flame: but remember he loved me when theſe particulars were unknown, and laboured for my welfare when a veil of doubtful obſcurity was thrown over my ſituation. Theſe are circumſtances to give weight and value to his paſſion. But theſe chimeras are now no more. I muſt drive them from my thoughts for ever; and inſtead of confeſſing and indulging, check and conquer them with all the fortitude I can ſummon to my aſſiſtance.

Going

FEB. 16.

Going down this morning to breakfaſt, I was ſurpriſed when I entered to find Lady Farnford and Mrs. Hindon tete a tete, and ſeemingly in earneſt converſation. Good morning, Miſs Seymour, cried the latter with a ſmiling air, the traces of laſt night's hauteur being entirely vaniſhed from her brow. Lady Farnford likewiſe accoſted me with abundance of civility and kindneſs, and they inſiſted on placing me between them.

Come, cried Mrs. Hindon, after a ſhort pauſe, which ſhe appeared to have employed in conſidering how ſhe ſhould introduce without abruptneſs what ſhe intended to ſay—Why ſhould there be ſuch diſtance among friends? To tell the plain truth Miſs Seymour, I could not ſhut my eyes all night for thinking in what a deſtitute and diſmal way you and Miſs Fanny muſt live if you are not ruled and perſuaded by thoſe who are intereſted

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in you. Here is Lady Farnford, who declares herſelf as anxious for your welfare as if you were her own children, and who proteſts that if you were ſo in fact ſhe ſhould be the firſt to adviſe an immediate application to my Lord Belmont. His Lordſhip cannot ſee his grandchildren ſtarve, or what is ſcarcely preferable, juſtle through life neglected and forgotten, for want of that little which his affluent fortune can ſpare with eaſe. Conſider he is unacquainted with your misfortune. He concludes you poſſeſſed of twenty thouſand pounds; and tho' that is but a trifle to what you might reaſonably expect, yet no doubt he might imagine it enough to ſupport you genteelly. I aſſure you in your caſe, with ſuch juſt claims, I would not content myſelf even with a little; and if he finds you mean to make a piece of work about it, take my word for it he will alter his tone as they ſay. Mr. Howard told us t'other day,

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talking of your father, that if he had choſen to refuſe the compromiſe offered him by my Lord, he might have been in poſſeſſion of one of Lord Belmont's eſtates of three thouſand per annum; and tho' he gave away his own money, he had undoubtedly no right to mar the inheritance of his children. That alone would ſurely make a good law ſuit; and the ſimple apprehenſion of it would certainly be ſufficient to frighten my Lord into terms. Come, Miſs Seymour, I'm ſure a young lady of your ſenſe muſt ſee clearly that rather than have ſuch diſturbance and noiſe created, your grandfather would eaſily be induced to ſettle handſomely on you, were it only for huſh money.

Allow me to aſſure you once for all, Madam, anſwered I, that nothing on earth ſhall ever prevail with me to attempt ſuch a meaſure. I am confident you muſt have wholly miſunderſtood Mr. Howard

Howard on this point; for ſuch are the unhappy circumſtances of the caſe, that my father preſerved no ſort of claim upon Lord Belmont's fortune, and was thoroughly ſatisfied and contented with the ſtipulation. Tho' this ſum is now greatly reduced, we have reaſon to hope a little ſtill remains, and on that little I truſt we ſhall be able to ſubſiſt independant of theſe cruel relations, who have ſo unnaturally renounced us. To have recourſe to law, (were there even a probability of ſucceſs,) is a plan at which delicacy and pride equally revolt.

Pride and nonſenſe, cried ſhe. Indeed Miſs Seymour I cannot conceive for my part the meaning of all this delicacy and refinement. 'Tis paſt my comprehenſion I confeſs.

Perhaps, cried Lady Farnford, who had not as yet been able to ſpeak for the volubility of her friend——perhaps Miſs Seymour is deterred by the hopeleſneſs of ſucceſs.

ſucceſs. All the world eſteems Lord Belmont irrevocable in his determinations. He is indeed a very obſtinate, whimſical old man. Lady Linroſe too is generally diſliked; being haughty, proud, and inflexible.

Yes, and no doubt her Ladyſhip finds her own advantage, cried Mrs. Hindon, in keeping her nieces at a diſtance from their grandfather.

We have no reaſon to accuſe her Ladyſhip of any ſuch intention, ſaid I. Perhaps, had ſhe poſſeſſed either ſenſibility or benevolence equal to our wiſhes, we might have expected a little more kindneſs (tho' ever ſo privately offered,) to two unfriended relations; who, divided from their friends, and in a manner alone in the univerſe, lay claim, from her at leaſt, to the good offices of humanity: but tho' ſhe has not proved warmly our friend and protectreſs, I am thoroughly convinced ſhe is far from having injured the cauſe

intruſted to her care. She is not generally beloved; but is allowed to be a woman of principle and honour; and a trifling portion of theſe qualities muſt prove ſufficient to deter her from a conduct ſo unworthy.

Well, Miſs Seymour, reſumed Lady Farnford, Lady Linroſe is not a woman eaſily melted by ſentiments of pity. But pride may extort where charity fails; and the deſire of preventing a revival of—of the unlucky ſtory, may perhaps prevail with her to intercede with my Lord Belmont to allow you a pretty round ſum to be quiet.

To Lady Linroſe, cried I with firmneſs, never will I apply.

Why then, returned Lady Farnford, what I mean to propoſe is, applying to their ſon. The idea occurred to me laſt night, on hearing Mr. Roatſley talked of in the higheſt terms by ſome friends we had to ſup with us.

Mr. Roatſley!

Mr. Roatſley! exclaimed I.

Yes, Mr. Roatſley. It ſeems his election to the borough of —— took place the day before yeſterday. Some of the company had been warmly his friends on that occaſion, which naturally led them to talk of him, and they ſpoke in ſuch high terms of his character, that I could not avoid at the time concluding what probability of ſucceſs an application of this kind muſt have to a young man of his diſpoſition.

What connection has Mr. Roatſley with Lady Linroſe? cried I in a tremor.

Lord don't you know, Miſs Seymour, that he is their ſon, and of courſe your firſt couſin.

Their ſon! Good heavens! exclaimed I, quite out of breath.

Good ſtars, ſaid Mrs. Hindon, is not that the young man who accompanied you in your paſſage from Calais, and of whom my brother talks ſo highly?

I know not, Madam.—But I hope not.

And pray why do you hope ſo? For my part I think it is the moſt agreeable intelligence at this juncture you could wiſh to hear: for I aſſure you my brother Howard told me that he ſeemed much ſtruck, and indeed no wonder, by the elegance of your appearance; and beſides, was it not he who attended you ſo aſſiduouſly at the Opera houſe. Oh! I make no doubt he knew perfectly well how nearly you were connected, though perhaps a prohibition from her Ladyſhip deterred him from acknowledging the relationſhip. And ſo you never once ſuſpected that he was the late Lord Linroſe's ſon all the while? well that is the drolleſt affair I have heard this age.

I dare ſay Madam, cried I, there may be ſome miſtake in this, elſe we ſhould have been ſooner informed. How comes the ſon of Lady Linroſe to appear under a borrowed name?

O as to that point, ſaid Lady Farnford, in this country nothing is more common. Mr. Roatſley aſſumed his preſent name becauſe it was accompanied by the inheritance of an eſtate in Ireland, left him by an uncle of his mother's, who died a few months ago.

How ſhall I convey to you, Sophia, an idea of the variety of emotions that agitated my heart at this moment. Oh! it is wholly impoſſible! This intelligence, ſo unexpected, ſo extraordinary, and oh! ſhall I add, ſo mortifying, (for a mixture of humiliation rendered my feelings at this moment ſtill more intolerable,) actually drew tears from my eyes:—tears, the ſource of which I could not abſolutely define, but which, to my companions, appeared merely the natural effects of uncertainty and vexation.

Oh! Sophia! how long have we remained in ignorance with regard to a point ſo infinitely intereſting. But I now

find that this inheritance, and conſequently this change of name, took place immediately before our arrival in England. Indeed, on inveſtigating the matter, Mr. Howard has diſcovered that Mr. Roatſley's return was occaſioned by that event. Mr. Howard therefore, in his enquiries relative to our family, heard often of a Mr. Dudley, but was informed he was abroad with his brother and Lord Belmont, and never received the ſlighteſt hint to lead him to conclude that our agreeable fellow traveller, Mr. Roatſley, was in fact the ſecond ſon of the late Lord Linroſe, whoſe character, even from the lips of Mrs. Weldon, does ſo much honour to his family. Indeed, had theſe enquiries been made of late, no doubt we muſt have been immediately acquainted with the truth; but the ſociety in which he ranges is totally diſtinct from that in which chance has placed us, and you may recollect it was directly on our

arrival

arrival that Mr. Howard exerted himſelf to ſatisfy our anxious deſire of being informed of every circumſtance concerning our relations. At that time Mr. Roatſley was himſelf but juſt arrived at his mother's country ſeat. His return was not generally known; and as we have not been once in any private company with him, excepting one half hour in our own lodgings, no opportunity for a diſcovery could poſſibly have occurred. Not but that a ſecret ſolicitude has induced me more than once to aſk ſeveral ladies who have been at different times viſitors here if they were acquainted with Roatſley; but a negative reply was always given, and I make no doubt he is wholly unknown to moſt of Mrs. Hindon's friends.

I will not, however, comment on this intereſting diſcovery till I have concluded my fatiguing converſation with theſe officious adviſers.

You muſt know, reſumed Lady Farnford, that this young man has one of the beſt characters in the kingdom. To him therefore, Miſs Seymour, I would adviſe you to apply by letter without loſs of time, or perhaps Mr. Howard might tranſact the buſineſs better in perſon. Mr. Roatſley is adored by his family; and poſſeſſes, I am told, an influence over the mind of Lord Belmont which would inſure ſucceſs. If the old Lord thinks his vow binding, why he may keep it if he pleaſes, only let him act with juſtice, and ſupport you in the line of life to which you were born.

Good God, my dear Sophia, what a propoſal? It entirely diveſted me of the patience and temper with which I had hitherto liſtened to advice ſo ſelfiſh, ſo indelicate, ſo perfectly unfeeling. I therefore put a final period to a perſecution that was grown intolerable, by expreſſing myſelf

myſelf with a cold and determined dignity, bordering perhaps a little on hauteur.

I muſt beg leave, ſaid I when I could contrive to be heard, entirely to act for myſelf and from my own ſentiments, in a point in which myſelf and ſiſter only are concerned; and tho' we muſt conſider ourſelves as under obligations to thoſe friends who wiſh to alter a reſolution they may deem abſurd and prejudicial to our intereſt, yet I muſt uſe the freedom to acknowledge that we partake ſo much of our grandfather's firmneſs as to be quite immoveable in our determinations, when convinced there is nothing in them contrary to reaſon and rectitude.

The gravity with which I pronounced this, diſconcerted them; and they both in a breath began to apologize for the liberty they had taken in an affair in which they ſaid *our intereſt alone* could be ſuppoſed to influence them. I could not reſiſt ſmiling at the expreſſion. I have

ſome reaſon to apprehend, however, that I ſhould not ſo ſoon have got rid of importunities equally troubleſome and officious, had not the reſt of the family made their appearance to breakfaſt, which happily interrupted the eager volubility of the ladies.

Oh, my Sophia, what a diſcovery! It has engroſſed and abſorbed me ever ſince I was made acquainted with it. Is it indeed poſſible that the ties of blood as well as thoſe of affection have united me with this amiable young man. I bluſh to make this confeſſion in terms ſo ſtrong, ſo explanatory; but the agitation of the preſent moment gives defiance to diffidence and ſhame, and conquers the reluctance with which ſuch an avowal muſt ever be accompanied.

I have pondered and conſidered every circumſtance of Mr. Roatſley's conduct ſince the beginning of our acquaintance, and indeed there are a number of circumſtances

ſtances explained by this information, which hurt and diſpleaſe me.

After thinking and reflecting on the whole tenour of his behaviour, I am convinced that duty and obedience to his family have enrolled him a party in their determinations. How flattering, how humane were his attentions during our paſſage, while ignorant of our ſecret claims to his good offices: yet how eaſily was he impreſſed with the moſt injurious ſuſpicions to our diſadvantage immediately afterwards: ſuſpicions, to which he muſt have ſubmitted with hardly an attempt towards being undeceived; for what confidence was to be repoſed in the repreſentations of a woman to whoſe character and principles, even by the confeſſion of his friend Captain Bradſhaw, neither truſt nor credit were to be given. Oh! Sophia! I am afraid he would have remained at eaſe under this falſe opinion, had not Mr. Howard's letter to Lady

Linroſe

Linroſe diſcovered us to him as a connection, in whoſe infamy and diſgrace a ſlight degree of delicacy muſt have rendered him concerned. It was the knowledge of this circumſtance, I now plainly perceive, that induced him to make known to Mr. Howard his fears for my ſafety, and which prevailed on him to diſcover an anxiety that wore the engaging aſpect of diſintereſted humanity, whilſt ſuppoſed to have actuated the boſom of a ſtranger, but which in Mr. Roatſley was but giving way to natural feelings.

I expreſs myſelf perhaps with acrimony; indeed on reading over what I have written I am confounded at my warmth of expreſſion. It is not eaſy, however, wholly to diveſt ones ſelf of prejudice in a point dear and intereſting to the heart. I am ſeverely wounded and diſappointed at one part of his conduct, which leads me perhaps to view it in other particulars

lars through a falſe and unjuſt medium. His behaviour after all, in regard to me, has been amiable, nay noble in the higheſt degree: but ah! did he poſſeſs the mind, the ſoul, the feelings which I have been blind enough to attribute to him, never could he have ſtooped to countenance a tranſaction ſo cruel and unnatural as that of renouncing us. He would not have paſſed himſelf upon us for a ſtranger, concealed the relationſhip of which he was aſhamed, and courted our acquaintance under a borrowed form while he poſſeſſed a title ſo indiſputable to our notice, had he choſen to have claimed it.

Perhaps indeed his mother had laid her injunctions on him to remain neuter in this affair till Lord Belmont's intentions were made known. But am I blinded by prepoſſeſſion when I aſſert that to deſert us after our accidental rencontre, and that profuſion of profeſſions of which it was productive, to withdraw his attention and regard

regard only when from the renunciation of his family and from the peculiarity of our circumſtances he knew it was become eſſential to us, is a ſtep which even parental duty can by no means juſtify. Common minds may argue in that manner, may in that manner act from motives of cold obedience, but if his heart is compoſed of materials ſo frigid, ſo correct, it is a loſs little to be regretted. I am offended Sophia, and perhaps unjuſtly; but I had weakly flattered myſelf our ſentiments were in ſome meaſure congenial; and his conduct has proved ſo oppoſite from what I am certain mine in ſimilar circumſtances would have been, that I am ſeverely wounded.

But my warmth may perhaps have led my concluſions too far. Lord Belmont's reſolution relative to us, muſt have arrived during his grandſon's abſence at his election, in which caſe he can hardly as yet have been informed of it, nor conſequently

quently have determined how he will in future conduct himſelf. His return to town, which will probably happen in the courſe of a few days, muſt therefore explain whether or not I have done him injuſtice. If he yet ſhews himſelf in the light of our relation, and diſavows his part of the family compact, I ſhall confeſs him wholly entitled to the too favourable opinion I have hitherto entertained of him.

I wiſh things may not be ſtill worſe with regard to Mr. Benſeley's affairs than Mr. Howard has acknowledged; for that worthy friend is extremely thoughtful; and altho' I wiſhed exceedingly to have a little private converſation with him in order to conſult about our future plans, I could find no opportunity, for he left the parlour immediately after he had done breakfaſt, and has been abroad all the morning. No time however is to be loſt in deciding. I am now doubly

anxious

anxious that our country ſcheme may take place; and am labouring to become eager for it; endeavouring to repreſent it to myſelf in the gaieſt colours, as the rural abode of peace, innocence, and harmony, where no agitations ſhall in future ruffle, nor painful mortifications diſturb the calm ſerenity of our lives. But it is in vain. My buſy imagination perpetually places it in a different point of view, as a ſtate of peacefulneſs, where tho' nothing wounds us nothing ſhall intereſt; and as a retirement, where tho' we enjoy tranquillity we ſhall not be able to taſte happineſs; and tho' tranquillity is perhaps in this fluctuating ſtate the ſole point attainable, and that to which all our wiſhes ought to be directed, yet at our time of life it is not eaſy to reſiſt the flattering hope that days of real enjoyment are yet in ſtore for us. If this is a deluſion, yet oh may I ever cheriſh it as a ſupport in every diſtreſs and a prop under

der every difficulty; without which ſoothing conſolation life would be a burthen and ſorrow unſupportable.

I forgot to mention that Fanny has not ſeen Wilmot ſince the diſcovery of the letter. His abſence, which is unuſual, muſt either be attributed to the conſciouſneſs of his ſchemes having been detected by his miſtake, or to the change in our affairs, which took place immediately after that event. No doubt his aunt has warned him to keep out of the way till our future expectations are clearly aſcertained. Fanny, whoſe latent ſpirit has been rouſed by his duplicity, took the earlieſt opportunity to inform Mrs. Hindon of her unalterable reſolution to break off all connection with her nephew. The lady received this determination with ſome appearance of ſurpriſe, but with much leſs oppoſition than would have followed ſuch a ſtep ſome days ago.

Mr. Howard

FEB. 17.

Mr. Howard did not appear yeſterday till dinner was announced, I had it therefore in my power only to hint to him that I requeſted he would not attempt from friendly compaſſion to conceal any additional diſappointments that were yet to be told us. He aſſured me that nothing deciſive had taken place; Mr. Benſeley's affairs continuing in the confuſion and uncertainty in which he had before repreſented them. This paſſed in a large company who dined here and ſtaid the evening; by which means it was not poſſible for me to requeſt a private conference with him. Mr. Howard ſeems, with his uſual goodneſs, to participate in our chagrin; for I never obſerved him before ſo grave and thoughtful as he has been ſince the arrival of Lord Belmont's letter.

letter. I began to ſuſpect that ſome private uneaſineſs might have affected his ſpirits; but a peculiar ſoftneſs in his addreſs, both to Fanny and myſelf, now convinces me that to his heart the diſtreſſes of his friends and thoſe more particularly his own, convey almoſt equal pain.

I have had a long converſation this morning with Miſs Parſons. My heart, ſoftened by my own diſappointments, ſympathizes in her's with augmented commiſeration; and as ſhe perceives that I, who was ſo lately the happy object of her envy and admiration, as created for the enjoyment of affluence, proſperity, and ſocial happineſs, am now her companion in ſuffering, ſhe returns my attentions by redoubling her endeavours to ſoothe and amuſe me, while ſhe finds, that tho' born to ſo many advantages, I am no leſs open than herſelf to the attacks of fortune.

You

You imagine, Miſs Seymour, ſaid ſhe this morning as we ſat together at work in my dreſſing room, (for Mrs. Hindon was gone out and I had inſiſted on Fanny's accompanying her in hopes that a little variety might diſſipate the chagrin of her ſpirits,) you imagine, and with reaſon that your mortifications and diſtreſſes have been ſevere: yet what have your ſufferings proved when compared with mine: hardly had I cloſed the eyes of one beloved parent, when the other claimed the ſame ſad duty. Theſe are however misfortunes which by the courſe of nature we muſt all expect. Heart-rending and acute as is the wound that ſuch calamities inflict, Time's lenient hand generally beſtows the balm to cloſe it. That loſs, heavy and irretrievable, did not come alone: the ſeverities of dependance, inſignificance, and contempt, were the miſerable conſequences of a blow in itſelf ſcarce ſupportable. Nor

was

was this all. She ſtopped, and hiding her face with her hands, ſuddenly gave way to a violent burſt of tears, which ſeemed to have been irrepreſſible and wholly overcame her.

I know well, cried I, you have ſuffered the rigours of fate, and Heaven knows what yet may remain for our portion, ſhould it pleaſe Almighty Providence to deprive us of independence, by taking away the remnant of our ſcanty fortune. All we ſhall have for it, my amiable friend, is to endeavour to profit from your laudable example, and to ſuffer unrepiningly thoſe ills, which from truſt in the unerring juſtice of Heaven, we may reſt aſſured muſt in the end work for our good.

Ah! Madam! cried ſhe, but there is one blow, cruel, biting, and acute, which the Almighty has not inflicted on you, and indeed it appears impoſſible you ſhould ever experience. You may behold yourſelf abandoned by the world, regarded with

with diſdain, and treated with indelicacy; but this you may bear, and from the conſcious ſuperiority of your mind, may bear perhaps with indifference; but ah! Miſs Seymour, there are wounds yet more bitter, feelings yet more keen, which I have endured, and which I heartily pray you may never know.

Heaven only knows, thought I to myſelf, whether theſe bitter, keen, and heart-felt ſufferings, may not yet prove mine.

Yes cried I, to the amiable, unhappy girl, taking hold of her hand with unfeigned compaſsion, I am ſenſible you claim too juſtly the ſuperiority in affliction. My heart feels ſincerely for what yours has endured. You have my warmeſt ſympathy; and if the demand is not importunate, and the recital will not prove a probe rather than a relief, will you gratify me ſo far as to unburthen your mind to me.

It is long, long, cried ſhe, ſoftened

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at my requeſt, ſince my heart has experienced the ſolace of confidence. The world turns with diſguſt from the oppreſſed; it flies diſtreſs as if contagious; and proſperity beholds it as a frightfull picture preſented to its view to check diſſipation and to frown on enjoyment.

She then told me that when ſhe was yet at ſchool, Captain Wilmot, at that time a young Enſign, and nearly related to her, uſed frequently to ſpend ſome weeks at her father's vicarage for the amuſement of ſhooting; and that during the holidays, when ſhe always returned home, he conſtantly paid her the moſt flattering attention, till ſhe confeſſed he made ſome impreſſion on her heart. Being however hardly fifteen, and little of her age, ſhe looked upon herſelf as a mere girl, and the ſchool duties generally drove her couſin from her thoughts and conquered her attachment.

At ſeventeen ſhe quitted ſchool entirely.

It

It was then that the abovementioned diverſion furniſhed a pretence for the Captain's ſpending almoſt the whole ſhooting ſeaſon at their houſe; a circumſtance that the young lady ſuſpected proceeded from a tenderer motive. In fact he had been but a ſhort time there, when he took an opportunity to diſcloſe his paſſion, which met with all the ſucceſs he could have wiſhed.

Gained by his early and continued partiality, accuſtomed as her near relation to ſee him in the moſt favourable light and to hear him favourably ſpoken of by others, ſhe was blind to the inſipidity and conceited folly of his character. Habit and affection equally conſpired to conceal his errors from her view; and if ſhe caught occaſionally a tranſient glimpſe of his imperfections, his unbounded profeſſions of love, added to her tenderneſs for him, caſt a partial veil over his defects. She acknowledged to her lover, that

that her heart had not been proof againſt his aſſiduities, and that were her parents to agree to their union, her conſent ſhould follow.

Mr. Parſons's illneſs however, which ſoon after followed, prevented the ſubject from being mentioned either to him or his lady. Miſs Parſons, from almoſt never quitting the bed ſide of her father, had few opportunities of entertaining her lover. The family was become anxious and gloomy, and the Captain not finding his reſidence ſo agreeable as formerly, ſoon left them to join his regiment.

Mr. Parſons's death, which happened a few days after the lover departed, bringing the embarraſſment of his affairs to light, informed the Captain too ſoon that inſtead of a very comfortable ſettlement, (for ſome previous windfalls to the family had induced him to conclude that Miſs Parſons would be left in affluent circumſtances,) he ſhould not receive a ſhilling with his bride.

I hope, Madam, you will do me the juſtice to believe, ſaid ſhe, that in ſuch circumſtances I was not girl enough to remain blind to the many obſtacles which then appeared againſt my union with a young ſoldier, who had little more than his commiſſion to ſubſiſt on; and fearing that from motives of delicacy he might be under difficulties how to act, I wrote to him as ſoon as grief would allow me, and laying briefly before him the diſadvantages of fulfilling our wiſhes at that time, ſince my mother and I exiſted merely upon a ſmall precarious penſion, which depended on her life, added, with many aſſurances of unalterable affection, that till things wore a more favourable aſpect, our engagements muſt be ſuſpended.

Would you believe it, Madam! my letter for ſix weeks remained unanſwered, tho' ſurely my diſmal ſituation demanded at leaſt the *ſympathy* of a man who had ſo lately

lately profeſſed himſelf my lover: and when at length it arrived, it was ſome time before I could comprehend the contents. It was dated ten days after the receipt of mine; though undoubtedly it could not have taken above a month to come from Liverpool, where his regiment was quartered. But this artifice, I afterwards found, was intended to deceive me into an opinion, that it had been written previous to a ſucceſſion to ſix hundred a year, which had fallen to him by the death of a diſtant relation.

In this epiſtle, written with the moſt phlegmatic indifference, he pretends to regard my letter as intended to cancel all our engagements; to which he implicitly ſubmits with many feigned expreſſions of regret.

My conduct, he ſaid, induced him ſincerely to wiſh that he might never behold me more. He called me inſenſible, unfeeling, and ungrateful; and after be-

ſtowing a number of other appellations equally falſe and deceitful, concluded with praying that time and abſence might enable him to conquer a paſſion, which every line of his letter proved exiſted no more.

On a firſt peruſal, I really imagined that ſome meaning miſconſtrued, or ſome phraze miſunderſtood, had given umbrage to my couſin, and in the height of my uneaſineſs inſtantly again wrote to him. I aſſured him ſolemnly that I ſhould ever regard as ſacred the engagement into which I had entered with my whole heart, and to fulfil which was it's firſt wiſh; and that all I deſired was to poſtpone an event that ſeemed at preſent mutually imprudent.

This however he thought proper never to acknowledge; and I was ſoon convinced that he had joyfully laid hold of this opportunity to regain his freedom. The conviction of his infidelity coſt me many ſighs;

ſighs; but the death of my dear and reſpected mother ſoon awakened me to new affliction.

Having been in her laſt moments recommended by her to my aunt, and left ſolely dependent on her care, I was invited, ſoon after the laſt ſad duties were performed, to take up my reſidence in her family, and began immediately to experience that cruel reverſe which has embittered every ſucceeding hour. You cannot but have perceived, my dear Miſs Seymour, that my misfortunes have reduced me almoſt to a level with the domeſtics in this houſe. Mrs. Hindon evidently regards me, and uniformly treats me as a menial dependent, inſtead of cheriſhing me with that care which my connexion with her claims and which her ſolemn promiſe to my mother to take charge of me ſeemed to imply and led me to expect. In lieu of thoſe careſſes, and that admirarion which in my happier

pier days any little advantages I poſſeſſed never failed to excite, and which made me think with pleaſure on ſpending my days under her protection, I found my aunt was one of thoſe who are wholly influenced by ſituation and appearances. Seeing me deſtitute and forlorn, ſhe now regarded me as an orphan whom an oſtentation of charity induced her to retain, and who, though entitled as her relation to ſubſiſtence, its unavoidable attendants were contempt and degradation.

You will eaſily imagine, that in my humiliation I met the eyes of my couſin with additional pain. The day on which you dined here, immediately after your arrival, was that on which I ſaw him for the firſt time: and though I am certain he muſt have felt embarraſſed and diſconcerted at the rencontre, he behaved with a degree of inſolence and effrontery which converted my expiring regret (for

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it is not eaſy wholly to eradicate a firſt and ſtrong impreſſion) into ſelf congratulation and gratitude to heaven that I had been ſpared a fate ſo miſerable as that of being connected with a human being capable of ſuch meanneſs and indelicacy.

I was now in company with Captain Wilmot every day; but we mutually avoided being ſo without witneſſes; and ſome time elapſed, though probably you never remarked it, before we even exchanged words. The cuſtom of ſeeing me has however ſo entirely conquered all embarraſſment or ſhame on his part, (if he was ever capable of any) that he has more than once preſumed to treat me with the familiarity due only to an inferior, calling me his pretty Jenny with the impertinent eaſe of a man who imagines that in my ſituation even his freedoms muſt be well received and dare not be reſented. In ſuch circumſtances,

pier days any little advantages I poſſeſſed never failed to excite, and which made me think with pleaſure on ſpending my days under her protection, I found my aunt was one of thoſe who are wholly influenced by ſituation and appearances. Seeing me deſtitute and forlorn, ſhe now regarded me as an orphan whom an oſtentation of charity induced her to retain, and who, though entitled as her relation to ſubſiſtence, its unavoidable attendants were contempt and degradation.

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cumſtances, where pride and delicacy are liable every moment to the ſevereſt wounds, with no enjoyment in the preſent and no chearing expectations for the future, happineſs is a phantom which flies me, and which I have no proſpect of overtaking on this ſide of the grave.

The unfortunate girl concluded her ſtory with tears, in which compaſſion made me heartily join. I think, my Sophia, my diſtreſſes ſeem nothing when compared with the burthen ſhe has ſupported ſo long, and from which there appears ſo little proſpect of relief. How ſhould I have rejoiced had more proſperous circumſtances allowed me to place this amiable young woman beyond the reach of ſuffering from pride and poverty, and enabled her to preſerve an honourable independence.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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